

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



TELEVISION SPECIAL

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WHEN FILM DIRECTORS MAKE TV

PLUS

- STEVE COOGAN AND ARMANDO IANNUCCI ON 'ALAN PARTRIDGE: ALPHA PAPA'
- SATYAJIT RAY ● 'BREAKING BAD' ● SHANE CARRUTH ON 'UPSTREAM COLOR'

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09

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The TARNISHED ANGELS

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- Beautiful new 1080p high-definition master • Feature-length audio commentary by film critic Adrian Martin
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On Blu-ray from 19th August 2013



SIMON KILLER

From the film makers of *Martha Marcy May Marlene* comes Antonio Campos's powerful, hypnotic, and remarkably assured *Simon Killer*. Emotionally compelling and visually stunning, *Simon Killer* is an examination of casual brutality, profane sexuality, alienation, and desperation, all cut to a killer soundtrack that underscores the borderline psychotic fervour of Simon's descent.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- High-definition transfer of the film in its original aspect ratio (presented in 1080p on the Blu-ray) • Optional English subtitles (SDH also available) • *The Last 15*—Campos's 2007 Palme d'Or nominated short film • *The Case of the Conscious Camera*—a 29-minute interview with Campos on the aesthetics of *Simon Killer* • Sundance alumni spotlight—an interview with Campos, Sean Durkin, and Josh Mond • *Conversations with moms*—an interview with Campos, Brady Corbet, and their mothers • A selection of behind-the-scenes and rehearsal footage featuring alternate takes • Original theatrical trailer • 56-PAGE BOOKLET containing a new essay by critic Karina Longworth; a new interview with Campos; an interview with Brady Corbet; alternative poster artwork; and more.

On Blu-ray and DVD from 26th August 2013

LA NOTTE

One of the masterworks of 1960s cinema, *La notte* [*The Night*] marked yet another development in the continuous stylistic evolution of its director, Michelangelo Antonioni—even as it solidified his reputation as one of the greatest artists of the 20th century. *La notte* is Antonioni's "Twilight of the Gods", but composed in cinematic terms. Examined from a crane-shot, it's a sprawling study of Italy's upper middle-class; seen in close-up, it's an x-ray of modern man's psychic desolation.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- New 1080p presentation of the film in its original 1.85:1 aspect ratio with previously censored sequences restored for the first time • Optional English SDH • Original Italian theatrical trailer • 56-PAGE BOOKLET with an essay by film-critic and scholar Brad Stevens, and the transcript of a lengthy Q&A conducted in 1961 with Antonioni upon the film's release

On Blu-ray from 16th September 2013



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An Alan for all seasons

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THE SATYAJIT RAY COLLECTION

Satyajit Ray is internationally acknowledged as one of the great masters of world cinema. From his extraordinarily accomplished debut 'Pather Panchali', his films - many of them masterpieces - have won him legions of admirers, among them Akira Kurosawa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, V.S. Naipaul and Martin Scorsese. Artificial Eye is now pleased to present five of his most celebrated titles, meticulously restored from the original film materials, for the first time on Blu-ray in the UK.



Charulata

Sensing the loneliness of his intelligent wife, a driven journalist enlists the help of his cousin, a sensitive writer, to keep her company. But upon meeting the pair feel an immediate connection and their feelings quickly and almost inevitably begin to deepen...

Released 26 August



Kapurush

When a screenwriter's car breaks down on a research trip he is shocked to come across a former lover in the nearby tea plantation. Recalling his inability to commit to her and the relationship's resultant breakdown, he attempts to make amends for the past but finds time hasn't healed the wounds.

Released 26 August



Mahapurush

Depressed and alone after the death of his wife, a lawyer named Gurupada is looking for help. Meeting a holy man, he decides to join his band of affluent disciples. But when his daughter and her lover also become involved the holy man's tales start to sound a little far fetched...

Released 9 September



Nayak

En route to an award ceremony a movie star meets a young journalist who is unimpressed by his fame. Deciding to be interviewed anyway, a rapport develops between the two and the film star reveals rather more of his true self than planned, ultimately compelling him to re-evaluate his life.

Released 9 September

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Editorial Nick James



ROUGH CUTS

As most readers know, this magazine is owned by the British Film Institute. To its great credit, the BFI has never in my 15 years of editing the magazine tried to interfere in any way with what we publish. So I can assure you that what I want to say here about the announced government cuts of 10 per cent of the grant-in-aid to the BFI does not come from the management – who, I assume, are still lobbying to get the government to rethink or to ameliorate the effects of such a cut.

Let me first give you the context. At a moment when most other arts institutions have been asked to find cuts of five per cent, the BFI has been asked to find double that amount. This would be bad enough had it not come on top of funding reductions of 18 per cent over the last two years at a time when the BFI had been asked to absorb the rump of the disbanded UK Film Council and to take over its role as a distributor of lottery funds. Before that the BFI had more or less suffered a decade at standstill in its grant-in-aid forced by the UK Film Council, which did not pass on annual inflation increases when it was responsible for the BFI. What this has meant is that the cultural side of the BFI – the National Film Archive, the South Bank film and events programme, the London Film Festival, the BFI Reuben Library, film education, film distribution, publishing etc – has effectively had its funding squeezed year by year for the whole of this century.

I want here first to clarify something that tends to get misunderstood. People assume that some of the £29.8 million of lottery monies the BFI distributes to film-makers each year can be used to fill the gaps, but legally they cannot. Let me spell it out in capitals: THE BFI CANNOT FUND ITS OWN REGULAR ACTIVITIES WITH LOTTERY MONEY. Yet I get the impression that its role as a distributor of these funds makes people assume it's primarily an industry body rather than a body that straddles both industry and culture, and therefore that it is separate from the other cultural institutions in being tainted somehow by the image of film as a money-spinning activity (I hear the hollow laughter of independent film producers as I say this). Politicians have always had trouble thinking of film as an art form, yet galleries across the world are filled with what to all intents and purposes are films, and name artists are turning their hand to making feature films in increasing numbers: Steve McQueen and Sam Taylor-Wood being the most obvious UK examples.

What these cuts threaten is not only the cultural basis from which film-making artistic talents emerge, but also the preservation of the nation's cultural memory on film



What these cuts threaten is not only the cultural basis from which film-making artistic talents emerge, but also the preservation of the nation's cultural memory on film. In recent years, the National Archive and its affiliates have supplied so much tremendous footage that has had a wide appeal, such as the Mitchell and Kenyon films of street life in the early 20th century, the 1945 archive material in Ken Loach's *The Spirit of '45* and the 1926 colour footage of London from Claude Friese-Greene's *The Open Road*. Right now on YouTube, for instance (and for obvious reasons), you can find a 1926 film from the archive about the announcement of the birth of Princess Elizabeth, the future Queen of England.

And yet there's been a strange silence from the film-making community around the cuts announcement. You can be sure that if it were the film production lottery funds themselves that were being cut, the media would be full of big-name British filmmakers attacking government policy, as there was when the Film Council was abolished. Let's assume that it's not that our film-makers are so self-serving that they only care when their own credit lines are affected. It must be instead that they have not yet heard about or understood the nature of these cuts. The BFI has said that the cuts may force it "to stop valuable front-line activities and reduce support for partner organisations". In truth, it's still reeling from the shock it admitted to after the announcement. It seems very unlikely that the BFI will be able to 'find' the £2.5 million cut without seriously restricting – or stopping altogether – one or more of its main cultural activities. Of course, any filmmaker or any one of us can say that cuts to the arts diminish in importance vastly when set next to the benefit cuts that so savagely affect real lives, but that's not the issue here. What sticks in our craw at *Sight & Sound* is the feeling that, for the British media, film never quite makes the grade as an art form and therefore it's an easy mark for the government to target. **S**

IN THE FRAME

THE ONCE-ANGRY BOYS



Double vision: the Boulting brothers' final film *Pastor Hall*

The films of John and Roy Boulting looked into every corner of post-war British institutional life with scorn warming to affection

By Geoffrey Macnab

The preview notes for the BFI Southbank centenary retrospective of prolific British filmmakers the Boulting brothers tell us that they had "a sharp eye for the absurdity of national institutions". It's an observation about John and Roy Boulting that is made frequently – and it's a fair enough assessment. From public schools (1948's *The Guinea Pig*) to universities (1957's *Lucky Jim*), from trade unions (1959's *I'm All Right, Jack*) to the military (1956's *Private's Progress*), from politics (1947's *Fame Is the Spur*) to foreign diplomacy (1959's *Carlton-Browne of the F.O.*), from the church (1963's *Heavens Above!*) to the legal system (1956's *Brothers in Law*), the Boulting twins poked into every nook of post-war British society. They made some very funny, well-observed films that provided a platform for actors like Ian Carmichael, Terry-Thomas and, above all, Peter Sellers to show off their comic gifts. As Charles Barr wrote in his obituary of Roy (who died in 2001), the brothers' films provided "a particularly sensitive barometer of the changing times".

Nonetheless, survey the Boultings' career and what you sense is a creeping disillusionment that started in the late 1940s. The brothers' early notion that film could be used to change social and political attitudes soon dissipated. One wonders what the Boultings themselves, later in their careers, really thought of their own earlier work. They used to joke about their reputation as 'the angry boys' and to pretend they were a little embarrassed by the high-minded and (they thought) humourless idealism of such early features as *Pastor Hall* (1940) and *Thunder Rock* (1942.)

Watch their 1967 feature *The Family Way* and you can see two sides of the Boultings pitted against one another. On the one hand there is the young, cultured and sensitive Arthur Filton (Hywel Bennett) and on the other, arm-wrestling and taunting him, his boorish, beer-drinking and relentlessly vulgar father (played by John Mills). The young Boultings were closer to Arthur

ON OUR
RADAR

Chantal Akerman

The A Nos Amours collective are to screen the complete cinematic works of Chantal Akerman over the next 18 months, including 'Jeanne Dielman' (1975, right), starting with 'Saute ma ville' (1968), 'L'Enfant aime' (1971) and 'Hotel Monterey' (1972) at the ICA, 26 September.



Monster Weekend

The BFI's blockbuster 'Gothic – The Dark Heart of Film' project kicks off in grand style with a weekend of outdoor screenings in the courtyard of the British Museum. 'Night of the Demon' screens on 29 August, 'Dracula' (right, 1958) on the 30th, and 'The Mummy' (1958) on the 31st. Tickets are available from the BFI website.





The Boulting brothers

Filton than they liked to admit. John (the older of the two by five minutes) drove ambulances for the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War, while Roy directed the Oscar-winning wartime documentary *Desert Victory* (1943).

Although working in different parts of the armed forces, the Boultings combined to make *Thunder Rock* (1942), a wartime propaganda film that makes fascinating viewing today because of its formally innovative structure. Adapted from a play by Robert Ardrey, it's about a former journalist (Michael Redgrave) who has retreated to a solitary life as a lighthouse keeper because he feels his years of campaigning against fascism have had no effect. There are both supernatural and modernist elements to the storytelling.

"The Boulting brothers are continually seeking for subjects that can give a deeper understanding of contemporary life," the *Daily Worker* enthused when John and Roy were busy making their Graham Greene adaptation *Brighton Rock* in 1947. The visual energy of that film is startling. The magnificent chase sequence early in the film, when a terrified Koley Kibber/Fred Hale (Alan Wheatley) is pursued through Brighton by Pinkie and his thugs, clearly owes a debt to Italian neorealism. Like Rossellini, De Sica et al, the Boultings were taking their cameras out on to the streets. The social observation found in the brothers' later comedies was also prefigured here in their detailed depiction of the seaside town and its more exotic characters.

Brighton Rock was directed by John whereas *Thunder Rock* was directed by Roy. The exact division of labour, though, was hard to



Thunder Rock

establish. "It is the twins' intention to alternate their jobs on successive pictures on the theory that a change is better than a rest," one journalist wrote. "If John removes his glasses, no-one will know the difference anyway."

Brighton Rock is slick in a way that the brothers' early anti-Nazi and very studio-bound *Pastor Hall* was not. Nonetheless, *Pastor Hall* stands up precisely because it has what so many of their later films lacked – an earnest sincerity. For all the creakiness of the production design, it's still shocking when the 74-year-old Pastor Hall (Wilfrid Lawson) is given 25 lashes by his Nazi captors. "You're coming into a concentration camp and that means you are coming into hell," he is told after the Germans arrest him. "We don't stand for any individualism."

The brothers were bruised by their battles on *Fame Is the Spur* (1947), their ambitious Howard Spring adaptation in which a socialist politician (played by Michael Redgrave) is corrupted by power. In a sense, the same fate awaited them: they became part of the establishment. Their films remained a fascinating record of how the British film industry's preoccupations were changing; they were well-crafted and funny. A few – notably the Leo Marks-scripted *Twisted Nerve* (1968) – even had *Peeping Tom*-like elements of perversity and originality. However, although the twins continued to rail against "Big Business and Organised Labour", the idealism that had made their early work so special had evaporated somewhere along the way. 📢

i A Boulting brothers retrospective plays in August at BFI Southbank, London

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE THE WORLD'S END

23% *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)

17% *Village of the Damned* (1960)

12% *They Live* (1988)

11% *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955)

10% *The Stepford Wives* (1975)

8% *Invaders from Mars* (1986)

8% *Chocky* (1984)

6% *The Big Chill* (1983)

4% *The Earth Dies Screaming* (1965)

1% *Army of Darkness* (1992)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH FEDERICO FELLINI

"I don't like the idea of 'understanding' a film. I don't believe that rational understanding is an essential element in the reception of any work of art. Either a film has something to say to you or it hasn't. If you are moved by it, you don't need it explained to you. If not, no explanation can make you moved by it."



The Wicker Man

Robin Hardy's 1973 film has risen from its initial lowly B-movie status to become a modern classic of British horror, and now the longer, supposedly lost, 'middle cut' has resurfaced, and is being re-released on 27 September to celebrate the film's 40th anniversary.



Iain Sinclair

The writer and regular S&S contributor is curating a season of 70 films to mark his 70th year, all to be presented in cinemas and venues across London. The screenings continues into June next year and include obscurities, classics such as Robert Hamer's 1947 'It Always Rains on Sunday' (at the Barbican on 18 September) as well as Sinclair's own film projects. Full details are at: king-mob.net/70x70listing



La Belle et la Bête

Philip Glass's reimagining of Jean Cocteau's 1946 film (with his score replacing Georges Auric's original and with the dialogue sung by vocalists), plays at the Edinburgh International Festival on 10 and 11 August. The film is presented by EFI as part of the BFI's Gothic season.



MEET CUTIES



Toy boys: Tony Leung as the cuddly toy-loving cop in Wong Kar-Wai's *Chungking Express*

While manchildren dominate US comedy, South-East Asian cutesiness has affected the men in Wong Kar-wai's hip world



By Hannah McGill

He's a grown man – a member, in fact, of a police force customarily portrayed onscreen as particularly macho. He has no visible dependent

children. Yet the cop played by Tony Leung in Wong Kar-Wai's *Chungking Express* (*Chung Hing sam lam*, 1994) – known to us only by his number, 633 – lives with quite a number of stuffed animals. We know these items don't belong to 633's recently departed ex-girlfriend, an air hostess, because when he finally packs her things in a box, it doesn't look big enough to contain them. It certainly wouldn't hold the biggest of the toys: an orange Garfield about four feet tall.

Garfield's presence in 633's flat has in the course of the film replaced that of a similarly proportioned fluffy white bear, a post-break-up

confidant of the lonely 633. The switch is made by snack-bar waitress Faye (Faye Wong) who, having acquired 633's spare keys, makes indirect romantic advances to him by messing with his property while he's out. Faye's inability to communicate directly with 633 is a mirror of his own dysfunctionality, manifested through his passive attitude to his relationship with the air hostess, and his tendency to project his own sorrows on to anthropomorphised objects in his flat. A wet washcloth is crying; a worn bar of soap is emaciated through grief; the white bear's refusal to speak is a heartbroken funk.

The adult male overinvested in a transitional object is a stock comic trope, from Elwood P. Dowd's imaginary friend in *Harvey* (1950), to Leo Bloom's beloved blue blanket in *The Producers* (1968), to the talking teddy bear who has remained alongside his owner well into adulthood in *Ted* (2012). He also has more tragic and sinister manifestations – Sebastian Flyte's enduring investment in Aloysius in *Brideshead Revisited* (1981 and 2008); the robot boy of *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) surviving on the hard-wired adoration of Teddy – but on the whole, he meets with indulgent sympathy, especially in a culture that has widely embraced as fact the

supposed displacement and uncertainty of the post-feminist male. 'Manchildren' – irresponsible, unskilled, sexually inadequate – have enjoyed a long spell of domination over US comedy on big and small screens alike; women too have their campaigners for sustained immaturity, in the charmingly wayward 'manic pixie dreamgirl' of indie-movie notoriety, and the post-adolescent layabouts of *Bridesmaids*, *Frances Ha* and *Girls*.

Wong Kar-Wai's films are frequently discussed in terms of his Western reference-points: English-language pop music, US independent cinema,



James Stewart in *Harvey*

the French New Wave. But the knock-kneed, pre-sexual courtship games played by the lovers of *Chungking Express* also respond to the *kawaii* (cute) trend that since the 1980s has spread from Japan throughout South-East Asia, expressed through adult fandom of cartoon characters and children's toys, and doll-like women's fashions.

Hip and self-aware as the film's presentation is, the characters of *Chungking Express* keep childhood close. Part of Faye's seduction campaign is to leave a picture of herself as a little girl in 633's flat; in the film's other storyline, the attempts of Cop 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro) to secure a date take him swiftly to women he was at school with. There's also childishness in the characters' fondness for repetition: Faye listens to The Mamas and the Papas' "California Dreamin'" over and over again; 633 likes the same thing to eat every night; 223 subsists on his ex-girlfriend's favourite tinned food. And these adults like to play dressing up: Faye ends the film adopting the same uniform as 633's ex, while he swaps cop gear for casual clothes to take over the snack bar. 233's mysterious fantasy woman (Brigitte Lin) is never seen without her blonde wig and sunglasses.

Unlike many a manchild parable, *Chungking Express* doesn't demand that its characters put away childish things in order to become grown up and productive. On the contrary, just as 633 regards the invasion of his home and theft of his property as beguiling rather than worrying, the characters' flights of whimsy appear to provide safe routes to the future. Even Garfield represents a significant point in the film – albeit one that

Unlike many a manchild parable 'Chungking Express' doesn't demand its characters put away childish things

may not be apparent until a second viewing. During the initial story of 233 and his gangster crush, the latter briefly crosses paths with Faye, who's on her way out of a toyshop carrying the Garfield doll. This – like Tom Waits's DJ spinning 'Blue Moon' in *Mystery Train* (1989), the diner robbery in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) and the glimpse of the lead character from *Three Colours: Blue* (1993) in *Three Colours: White* (1994) – is a crossover-point that displays to the viewer that the film's story threads are simultaneous. Faye's *kawaii* toy is a key to the film's structure.

Chungking Express's Garfield (which may or may not be official merchandise: the world's most widely syndicated cartoon cat is the subject of many an unlicensed depiction) has a T-shirt which bears the slogan, "Are we having fun yet?" Though of disputed origin, this phrase is most commonly credited to the cartoonist Bill Griffith, who placed it in the mouth of his character Zippy the Pinhead (and took extreme umbrage when it was appropriated by Garfield). "It is an expression of the American existential dilemma, of anxiousness," Griffith has said.

Not just American. In the neon-lit Hong Kong of *Chungking Express*, identity is so unstable that even a trusty teddy bear can change his stripes before your eyes. ☺

THE FIVE KEY...

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH FILMS

As René Clément's *Plein Soleil* is re-released into UK cinemas, we examine the sharpest adaptations of Highsmith's pitiless thrillers



By Nick James

The intensely private Patricia Highsmith (left) was reluctantly launched to fame by Alfred Hitchcock's decision to turn

Strangers on a Train, her debut novel, into a movie. Her subsequent brooding, satirical psychological dramas have proven rich territory for film adaptations, particularly the novels featuring everyday psychopath Tom Ripley. Graham Greene called her, "a poet of apprehension" who had "created a world... claustrophobic and irrational which we enter each time with a sense of personal danger."



1 Strangers on a Train (1951)

The perpetual unease of Highsmith's fiction is delivered with customary verve by Hitchcock in this tense murder-swap thriller. Farley Granger, left, is the tennis star with the unfaithful wife, Robert Walker, right, the opportunist with the obstructive father who suggests they share a lethal solution.



2 Plein Soleil (1960)

Highsmith declared herself satisfied with gorgeous Alain Delon as her most notorious protagonist in this chic and gripping adaptation of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Posing as a friend of errant rich kid Dickie Greenleaf, Ripley gets himself sent to Italy to track him down, where he turns the situation to bloody advantage.



4 The Cry of the Owl (1987)

A divorced Peeping Tom is welcomed in too keenly by the subject of his gaze only to find himself entangled in murder. Claude Chabrol's mid-80s take on Highsmith's tale relocates it from the US to France and goes for an extra level of satire, whereas Jamie Thraves's 2009 version is as tense, bleak and moody as they come.



3 The American Friend (1977)

Wim Wenders's take on *Ripley's Game* drew out the cool psychopathy of Highsmith's study of a terminally sick picture framer being nudged by Ripley (played by Dennis Hopper, above) into assassinating a gangster. It's a bleak neo-noir buddy movie, unlike Liliana Cavalli's 2002 black comedy version, which has Malkovich as Ripley.



5 The Talented Mr. Ripley (1999)

Though this version is slightly inferior to Clément's (see above), Anthony Minghella's decision to cast Matt Damon as Ripley and to rewrite Highsmith's ending brought out the manifold undertones of challenged sexuality beneath Ripley's malleable surface, and found a dazzling Dickie Greenleaf in Jude Law.

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LOVE EXPOSURE
AND HIMIZU



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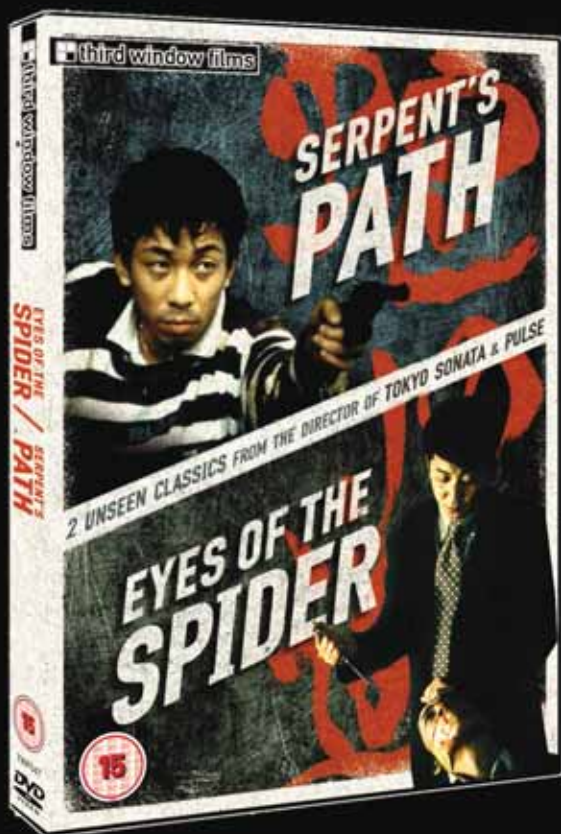
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A LETTER TO PAUL SCHRADER

A personal message to the writer of *Taxi Driver* and director of *American Gigolo*, as we await his new film, the erotic thriller *The Canyons*



By Mark Cousins

Dear Paul. We've met a few times. We got drunk once – an exciting event in my life but not in yours, I'm sure. I remember

more of what you said on those two occasions than I do of almost any other encounters I've had with a filmmaker. Until I met you, I thought I'd thought about things like religion, story, metaphors and bodies, but you ran rings around me. Billy Wilder had the words "What Would Lubitsch Do?" in a frame on his office wall. Since those two meetings I've sometimes asked myself, "What Would Schrader Think?"

I've been asking that a lot recently, probably because your new film *The Canyons* is coming. It sounds as if it takes you to a different part of the taste map, the sex map, the filmmaking map. It sounds as if you are thinking aloud with *The Canyons*, trying to keep ahead, perhaps, or keep your head.

I'm on the top deck of an Edinburgh bus – front seat – as I write this. As the bus moves forwards, its Cinemascope window, like a movie phantom ride, makes me think of *Taxi Driver's* windscreen. But today the cityscape isn't moving in slo-mo, isn't scored to Bernard Herrmann's sliding minor chords. And, as I'm not driving, the film of yours this bus ride is closer to is *Light Sleeper* (1991). I imagine myself as Willem Dafoe in that film, staring out of the limo window at the passing scene. For him, everything is a passing scene. Life slides past him like Herrmann's chords, like a drug comedown.

As my bus makes its winding way from the housing estates on the outskirts of Edinburgh towards the stately centre of this capital city, from the local to the national to the international, it strikes me, Paul, how much your work so far has been a tracking shot, a phantom ride, a rear-view mirror. You said recently that you had to write your book *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson and Dreyer* (1972) when you were young, when the experiences of your Calvinist upbringing were still fresh in your mind, because you could sense them slipping away. You were probably glad to see them in that rear-view mirror, receding, releasing you, and yet you got a book out of them before they were a dot on the horizon. Granton, a working-class part of Edinburgh, where I got on this bus 20 minutes ago, is a dot on my horizon. I was brought up in a place like Granton, but now I live in a fancy flat, with arty people. My own private slippage. We're slipping now, on this bus, between worlds. Can you hear the social glissando? Could you hear it in the early 1970s, when you were suddenly free and yet, to use your word, festering?

At the end of youth, what did you turn into? American cinema's existentialist in chief. *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Hardcore* (1978), *American Gigolo*



Warholian casting: James Deen and Lindsay Lohan in Schrader's *The Canyons*

(1980), *Raging Bull* (1980), *Mishima* (1986), *Light Sleeper*, *Affliction* (1997) were films about men in a godless world, in which the tide has gone out. They're obsessed by bodies – their own bodies: interfaces, prison houses. Did you read Merleau-Ponty, or did you end up making films about bodies as pale proxies for souls because of that fruity phrase of Freud's, "the representation of a thing by its opposite"? However you got there, such existentialism was your heyday, wasn't it? Your bailiwick. Your city centre. I'm in the city centre now. Solid buildings, certitude.

But then came the mid-90s, Paul, and your certitude went out of the window. Is it true that, when you were watching *Pulp Fiction*, you turned to the person you were with and said something like, "It's over"? I hope so. I love that you could see, instantly, in its postmodern cut-up, its iridescent serious-and-at-the-same-time-not, that your seriousness was suddenly in American cinema's rear-view mirror. Did films like *Pulp Fiction* dethrone you? It and *Barton Fink* and *The Big Lebowski* and, even, your compadre Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas* were post-existential, weren't they? They weren't asking why we exist and is this body, this anxiety, it? They were burnished Möbius strips of story and other movies.

So you found yourself outside the citadel again. Or rather, you stayed put and the citadel moved. Digital changed the map of cinema, which became a multiverse when, of course, you made *universes* – films about lonely men in cars, boxing rings etc. As well as the city

shifting under your feet, you were shifting too, of course – having kids, losing friends, getting older – and so you shifted your central peeping character. Travis Bickle in the front of the car, who morphed into John LaTour in the back, became Woody Harrelson's Carter Page III in *The Walker* (2007). Page was on a grand tour too, though life was more a performance for him than it was for Travis and the rest.

What shows how alive you are, Paul, is the way you've tracked the changes. In media interviews and festival appearances, it's clear that your thinking has shape-shifted, kept up and – more than most (more than me) – looked ahead. You've talked about the end of empire, of cinema, of moviegoing, yet instead of saying goodbye to all that and becoming a painter like Soderbergh, or making funerary art, you've made *The Canyons*, which has a new type of business plan and Twitter-era teasing. In Lindsay Lohan, you've gone for Warholian casting. When you could have been aloof and grand, played the legend, dissolved into movie history or hidden behind your canonical films, you have instead thought yourself into the era of online porn by casting its poster boy, James Deen.

The trailer of *The Canyons*, with its closed cinemas and undressing people, makes it look like Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* meets *American Gigolo*. Such a film would be great but also safe in a way, and tasteful and deep. I suspect that there's more surface to *The Canyons*, more of that disco tinniness that Giorgio Moroder's score gave to *Gigolo*. I'm glad I'm writing to you before I've seen it, because it's fun to imagine how you've taken your fascination with bodies further than ever before. How you've checked in your pride or dignity to make a film on favours. How you've seen, in Lindsay Lohan, elements of Marilyn Monroe. How you've not done an *Ozu* on us. How you've kept driving your taxi... 9

When you could have been aloof and grand you have thought yourself into the era of online porn by casting its poster boy

DEVELOPMENT TALE

THE DEVIL AND THE FLESH



Pure fantasy: Amanda Seyfried and Juno Temple in *Lovelace*, which presents conflicting versions of the *Deep Throat* star's story

Challenges over how best to tell the troubled tale of porn star Linda Lovelace kept the project in limbo until a radical idea pointed the way

By Charles Gant

Given the transforming arc of the unlikely life of Linda Boreman aka Lovelace – from Catholic schoolgirl to the most famous porn star who ever lived, and then to anti-porn feminist crusader – it's surprising Hollywood didn't get there sooner. Then again, the dark details of her porn odyssey and abusive marriage, outlined in her 1980 autobiography *Ordeal*, would potentially prove too big a challenge for mainstream audiences. Imagine Entertainment's Ron Howard and Brian Grazer at one point planned a biopic of Linda, but instead produced the 2005 documentary *Inside Deep Throat*, directed by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato.

It wasn't long afterwards that writer Merritt Johnson told Laura Rister he was interested in writing Linda's story for the screen. A former

casting head and vice-president of development and production at Miramax, Rister had joined Jason Weinberg's management company Untitled Entertainment to spearhead a new push into producing and packaging. Now she and Weinberg took the Lovelace project to fellow producer Jim Young, who financed a screenplay from Johnson. As Rister explains, "We had a shared interest in how Linda's life in its various incarnations paralleled the changing cultural landscape of the US with regards to women's rights and feminism, the sexual revolution and pornography, and liberal versus conservative politics."

Writing the screenplay, however, was no easy task. "Trying to capture both the *Deep Throat* era and the activist years... we would have needed a miniseries to tackle it all," says Rister. "This process took a couple of years of script development. Early on, we even talked about an approach similar to the Richard Eyre film *Iris* – with Courtney Love playing the older Linda and a younger actress playing the *Deep Throat* ingenue."

Time, for this production, was not an available luxury. In September 2007, Anna Faris announced

she had attached herself to play Linda in rival film *Inferno*, to be written and directed by Matthew Wilder. She exited a year later, and was replaced with Lindsay Lohan. Meanwhile one of the original *Inferno* producers, Heidi Jo Markel, parted ways with the film, boarding *Lovelace* instead and bringing on board financier Millennium Films, with which her company had an output deal.

By the end of 2009, it was time to bring directors on board. The producer team – Rister, Young, Weinberg and Markel – settled on the seemingly novel choice of documentary filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, whose careers include Oscar winners *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (together, 1989) and *The Times of Harvey Milk* (Epstein, 1984). The pair had also written and directed the innovative biopic hybrid *Howl*. Epstein and Friedman had a radical new idea for structuring *Lovelace* – playing events first as they were seen at the time by observers, and then as they were later recounted by Linda – which immediately struck a chord.

It didn't hurt that this was also a convenient way of broadening the film's appeal. "We knew

that if we told the story in a linear fashion, it would just be too bleak from the beginning," Friedman explains. "The idea of presenting the narrative as it was first understood by the world – which was the more kind of fun, free love, sexual-revolution kind of feeling – would allow us to give the audience a good time for that part of the film."

But, insists Rister, this wasn't the prime motivation: "For us it was a more interesting way to open up a dialogue about her and about the time." Adds Friedman, "We were intrigued by this phenomenon of multiple narratives – contradictory narratives from the same person. It was kind of a *Rashomon*, all from one person's perspective, as she evolved in the course of her life."

The big negative was that *Lovelace* was still in a race to the screens with *Inferno*, and the new approach would require a new screenplay. But the producers moved forward, hiring writer Andy Bellin, whom Markel had just worked with on the Clive Owen drama *Trust*, and knew to be fast and collaborative. A big boost was the hard-won support of Linda's lawyer Catharine MacKinnon, a feminist scholar and activist who'd known her well and held an archive of relevant material at Harvard. Through MacKinnon, the film also received the blessing of Linda's two children.

While Millennium was always ready to finance the film, the green light remained cast-dependent, with a firm eye on foreign value. As Lohan exited *Inferno* to be replaced by Malin Akerman, *Lovelace* scored a coup when it landed Amanda Seyfried, and Peter Sarsgaard stepped up to play abusive first husband Chuck Traynor – a role that Rister says "scared away many actors". The package was now weighty enough to draw significant names to the supporting

Linda Lovelace's life paralleled the changing cultural landscape of the US with regards to women's rights and feminism

parts, including Sharon Stone, Hank Azaria, Juno Temple, Wes Bentley, Eric Roberts, Chloë Sevigny and *Howl* star James Franco as Hugh Hefner.

The 25-day shoot wrapped in January 2012 and the film premiered a year later at Sundance, where it was bought, before the credits rolled, by Harvey Weinstein – Rister's old Miramax boss – for US distribution via the TWC Radius division. Despite casting announcements as recently as January 2012, with a filming start date of February announced for that year, *Inferno* never did get made, and presumably now never will.

In the days when Rister was trying to finance the picture, before Millennium came on board, she would always hear the same old mantra: "Oh, it's period. Oh, it's a tragic victim story and it's female-driven. And it's small and dark." But, says Rister, "My partners and I always thought: no. Linda was an icon for the era; the time is of particular fascination to people; the idea of the first commercial porn film... It's often challenging to pull together financing, but all you can do is go by your own instincts." ☺

i *Lovelace* is released in the UK on 23 August and is reviewed on page 77

THE NUMBERS SUMMER ARTHOUSE FILMS

By Charles Gant

Summer has long been a tricky period for arthouse cinemas, with many major titles held back for the anticipated uplift of the autumn/winter 'awards corridor' and the multiplexes flooded with blockbusters. On the other hand, the months of June, July and August do traditionally bring a steady trickle of smaller films, including many with genuine crossover potential: *A Royal Affair*, *Searching for Sugar Man*, *Killer Joe*, *The Angels' Share* and *The Imposter* all from last year, for example, plus *Magic Mike* straddling the mainstream/specialised divide.

Blame it on the heatwave or an unlucky mix of product, but summer 2013 is so far proving notably less profitable for the arthouses. *Behind the Candelabra* delivered, but overall it's been lean pickings. Five-star reviews for titles including *The Act of Killing* (£73,000 at press time), *Stories We Tell* (£60,000) and *Blancanieves* (£25,000) didn't translate commercially, while more-middlebrow offerings – including *Populaire* (£329,000), *Renoir* (£68,000) and Audrey Tautou-starrer *Thérèse* (£119,000) – underwhelmed.

For Jason Wood, programmer for the Curzon chain, despite some pleasant surprises – documentary *Beware of Mr. Baker* chugged along nicely at his Soho site – it's been a fairly dispiriting season overall. Take Richard Linklater's *Before Midnight*, for example. "I anticipated it being huge," he says. "It had all of the elements: a good campaign, the broadsheet press behind it, the support of all the arthouses, and it just didn't connect. When you have all those elements and the film still doesn't work, where does that leave us?"

Summer is traditionally the time that blockbusters creep into the arthouse programming mix, although this year Curzon didn't find much that fitted its brand, and nobody got rich playing, say, Guillermo Del Toro's *Pacific Rim*. Comments Wood, "There's always this idea of culpability and responsibility: distributors have to be



Third time unlucky: *Before Midnight*

brave to pick up the films; exhibitors have to be brave and take a chance on them; but I think the responsibility also comes back to audiences, and they need to come. If you look at what we've played in this difficult period, we've offered a really diverse, interesting and challenging diet of films. We've given audiences *A Field in England*, *The Act of Killing*, *Stories We Tell*, *The Bling Ring*, *The Story of WikiLeaks*, *Wadjda*, *Breathe In*. The films are there."

As *Sight & Sound* goes to press, the July heatwave is finally breaking, and hopes are high for *Frances Ha*, in particular. After a tough summer, Wood won't be the only one looking at the numbers with particular interest. "If audiences don't come, cinema chains like Picturehouse, Everyman and even Curzon, are we better off saying: OK, we tried this, they don't want it, let's go the more mainstream route?" ☺

ARTHOUSE CINEMA, SUMMER 2013

Film	Screens	Gross
Behind the Candelabra	272	£3,256,682
Before Midnight	106	£722,432
The Iceman	220	£558,962
The Stone Roses: Made of Stone	82	£474,109
The Bling Ring	75	£468,949
Summer in February	64	£394,139
Populaire	76	£328,551
Much Ado about Nothing	64	£288,781
Byzantium	160	£255,651
The East	123	£158,015

Box office at 21 July; screen count at widest point of release; films released from 31 May onwards

AND THE AWARDS GO TO...

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

There is a strong showing from emerging women filmmakers in the latest round of projects to receive Lottery funding, but we are still committed to established talents such as Mike Leigh, Ken Loach and Lone Scherfig



In production: Agyness Deyn stars in Bryn Higgins's forthcoming *Electricity*



By Ben Roberts

As the Film Fund bakes on the fifth floor of the BFI's Stephen Street building, and conversation turns to incoming invitations for the autumn festivals, it's time to take stock of our production investments at the mid-year mark.

Our Lottery budgets run from April to March, and we must commit the full budget through our 'greenlight' committees – whether or not the films go immediately into production – by the end of each year. We must be neither under- nor over-committed, which requires a small amount of finger-in-the-air and a greater amount of faith in the producer when it comes to mapping which projects will be financed, and when. Given how many applications we have to turn away each week, it would be a crime to underspend.

We have at least structured our decision-making for debut features this year by assessing blocks of applications every three months. This has been helpful on several fronts: we can look at new work collectively, which has tended to spotlight the most distinctive projects, and it means we can signal an early commitment to producers as they seek to raise finance in conditions that continue to prove challenging even for lower-budget films. Many of the films for which we signal our support can take many months (and on occasion, years) to complete their budget shuffle.

As I write, we have just made our decisions for round two. Having previously alighted on Esther May Williams's ethereal odyssey *Light Years* and Debbie Tucker Green's *Second Coming* (which is happily already through production), we have chosen to back Andrew Steggall's gay rites of passage film, *Departure*; Jane Linfoot's unsettling *The Incident*, and the feature debut of experienced

TV director Philippa Lowthorpe, a tuneful drama reminiscent of *Salaam Bombay!* and *The Selfish Giant*. Overall, then, a promisingly strong showing from emerging women filmmakers so far.

Films from other new or newish filmmakers that are on the runway or in production include: Gerard Johnson's rabbit-hole crime drama and follow-up to *Tony, Hyena; XplusY*, the movingly mathematical feature debut of documentary filmmaker Morgan Matthews; and Bryn Higgins's pathophysiological (I don't know how else to describe it) *Electricity*.

Our first awards of the year, however, were not for the work of up-and-coming directors: Mike Leigh's J.M.W. Turner biopic and Lone Scherfig's feature based on Laura Wade's incendiary play *Posh*, which is currently in production. We recently visited the set of the latter at Pinewood, where Lone and the production buzzed on a too-hot but devilishly detailed dining-room set. As a ten-bird roast sweated in the centre of the room, and Lone concentrated on camera tests for some bloody prosthetics, we were in a territory somewhere between *Another Country* and *A Clockwork Orange* (or *Brideshead* and *Bridesmaids*, depending on who you asked). Wade remarked on the invaluable experience of a young writer collaborating with a director so closely on her work as it emerges as a full-blooded feature, and we left Pinewood charmed by the 'collegiate' spirit of the production – no pun intended.

Mike Leigh's film, meanwhile, is something of an obsession for me: a too-tempting combination of filmmaker and subject, and a grand detour from

We are looking for important films with popular appeal that will penetrate our film culture – these remain the holy grail

Leigh's bittersweet suburban melancholy. Any information about the film will remain cloaked in a Turnerian fog but, contrary to last year's pronouncements that directors like Leigh were 'finished' after the PM's calls for Lottery funding to support more 'commercial' filmmaking, we are comfortably committed to supporting those filmmakers whose output remains steadfastly British, who encourage first-class performances from their cast, and who continue to punch above their weight internationally.

And so to another heavyweight: Ken Loach, whom we are supporting alongside Film4 on *Jimmy's Hall*, a robustly political yet musical and beguiling account of Jimmy Gralton, the only Irishman ever to be deported by an Irish government for his alleged communist activities. Ken is having something of a run of it of late, and more than merits continued investment. *The Angels' Share* was a box-office success, while *The Spirit of '45* was an op-ed regular, a trending topic, a rallying cry and a "Tookey's Turkey" in the *Daily Mail* – surely the highest accolade in film?

Returning to the Cameron conundrum, the search continues for engaging and original material for mainstream audiences – important films with popular appeal that will penetrate our film culture. These remain the holy grail, and seem to require all manner of strange alchemy. Two upcoming projects spring to mind that have us all a-quiver, but it would be foolish to name them yet when so many of our biggest successes have turned out to be the biggest surprises.

It may or may not be Jon Wright's follow-up to *Grabbers*, *Our Robot Overlords*, a nonetheless hugely entertaining and madly ambitious effects-heavy Spielbergian fantasy, which sits somewhere between *The Tripods* and *The Goonies*, stars (Sir) Ben Kingsley and Gillian Anderson, and has had an effect on the Film Fund team akin to a round of tequilas for breakfast. @bfbfen



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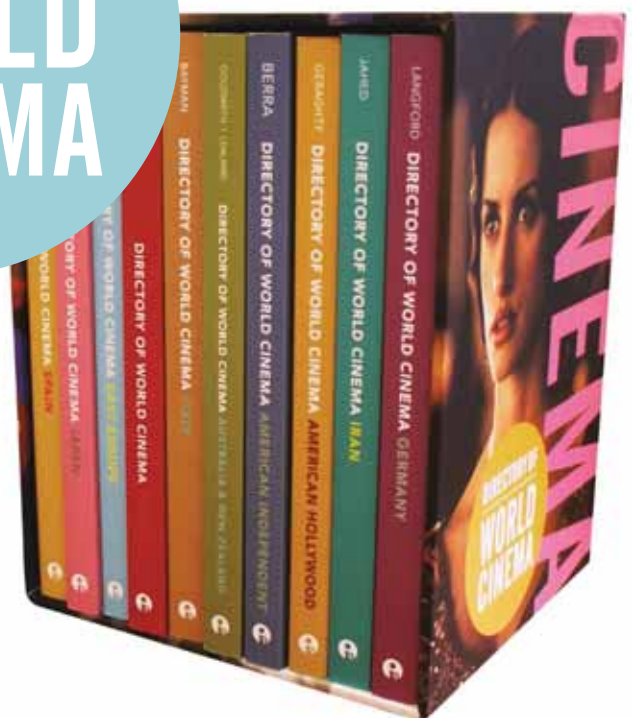
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LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

Exclusive Media's Guy East and Nigel Sinclair, the team behind Formula 1 drama *Rush*, have long shown a talent for backing winners

By Geoffrey Macnab

This autumn, when Ron Howard's Formula 1 movie *Rush* revs up in earnest in cinemas, two British movie executives will be looking over the box-office results with special attention. Guy East and Nigel Sinclair, the co-founders of Exclusive Media, aren't well-known names to the general public but, together or on their own, they have been behind some very significant films over the last 25 years: From *Dances with Wolves* and *Driving Miss Daisy* via *Terminator 3* to vampire remake *Let Me In* and *The Woman in Black*, in recent years. *Rush* is arguably their most ambitious project yet.

East and Sinclair first met in the mid-1980s. Back then, East was at Goldcrest, while the Scottish-born Sinclair was a Los Angeles-based lawyer. When East founded Majestic Films, Sinclair – a partner in law firm Sinclair Tennenbaum, representing such figures as Mel Gibson, Ridley and Tony Scott and Peter Weir – handled legal affairs for the company.

These were the early days of the independent film market – an era when the video market was booming and action movies were being made by the bucketful.

Majestic, under East, was one of the first indie outfits to move away from genre fare. Its business model was to 'pre-license' film rights to distributors around the world, thereby providing a sizable part of the budgets for these films.

"The rollout of what we now know as home entertainment started at the end of the 1970s with VHS tapes and then the advent of cable television," Sinclair explains. "This created different ways to make films both internationally and in the United States. The television companies in the major European states were all being privatised in the spirit that drove Margaret Thatcher. Guy realised there was an opportunity for a classy international sales agent that dealt with Hollywood – the world of independent filmmaking and sales agents up to then tended to be [dealing with] exploitation movies and the occasional Hollywood movie."

Majestic had a remarkable run in the late 1980s, backing such films as Kenneth Branagh's *Henry V* (1989), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) and *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Thanks to these films' prestige and success, Majestic was treated seriously by the studios. Costner was open in his praise for the rapid and honest way Majestic handled the finances and accounting on *Dances with Wolves*.

East eventually sold Majestic to Italian media company Rizzoli, and he and Sinclair founded Intermedia in 1995. The idea was to have Sinclair in LA while East looked after the international side of the business. Initially, Intermedia didn't develop its own screenplays. "What we would do is be the executive producers on these movies, giving notes and being a gadfly – trying to get the producers to drive their scripts to a point where we could make them," says Sinclair.

Intermedia was making films like *Hilary and Jackie* (1998), *Sliding Doors* (1998) and *Iris*



Entrepreneurs and individualists: Guy East, left, and Nigel Sinclair

These days, to make a really big film, you need a number of producers with very separate skills. They need to be experts

(2001) in the UK while also putting together films in the US. The aim, says Sinclair, was to "cross-pollinate some of the excellence you get in development in Hollywood with the original flavour of the British industry".

Intermedia went public on the German 'Neue Markt', the ill-fated German stockmarket launched in the late 1990s. With the money raised from its public offering, the company grew ever bigger. After merging with Moritz Borman's Pacifica to form IM International Media, it went on to make such big-budget films as *K-pax* (2001) and *Terminator 3* (2003).

East and Sinclair left Intermedia in 2002. "Guy and I are entrepreneurs. We are individualists. We had a very competent corporate board and German shareholders," Sinclair remembers. "It was time for us to move on."

The next step was to set up Spitfire, which produced the documentary *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* (2005) and *Amazing Journey: The Story of the Who* (2007). As before, East was based in London and Sinclair in LA.

"Before we knew where we were, we had actually got quite a good, strong active company going," East recalls. One change he points out from Intermedia days was that Spitfire was closely involved with developing and owning its own material rather than relying on foreign sales. "We were trying to change our own destiny more than it just be the luck of what came through the door. That was a really philosophical change of plan." They were ready to take their time.

Early in Spitfire's existence, Sinclair and East were approached by Simon Oakes, who had recently taken over the Hammer horror brand

name with investment from the Dutch company Cyrte Investment. Spitfire made a first-look deal with Hammer. Then, Cyrte bought Spitfire, which merged with Hammer; a holding company called Exclusive Media Group was set up in May 2008.

Exclusive is involved in development, financing, production, marketing and distribution. In industry jargon, it is a 'one-stop shop' and an 'indie studio', and has even recently diversified into publishing, TV and theatre.

Some of its early efforts, including the Hammer-branded *Let the Right One In* remake *Let Me In* (2010) and *The Resident* (2011), were relative disappointments at the box office, but last year's *The Woman in Black* (2012) became the highest-grossing British horror film in 20 years. Other recent releases such as *The Ides of March*, *Snitch* and *End of Watch* were similarly well received.

With a reported \$60 million budget, Ron Howard's *Rush* is a drama about the 1970s rivalry between racing drivers James Hunt and Niki Lauda. Just as in the old *Dances with Wolves* days, *Rush* was a project that was pre-sold very widely.

Exclusive co-financed *Rush* with US company Cross Creek Pictures. There are also other partners including Ron Howard and Brian Grazer's Imagine Entertainment, Working Title, German outfit Egoli Tossell and UK company Revolution. Screenwriter Peter Morgan is also a producer. It seems like a lot of cooks, but this is the way big-budget indie films have to be pulled together.

"These days, to make a really big film, you need a number of producers with very separate skills. They need to be experts in their fields," East explains.

For East and Sinclair, *Rush* is yet another opportunity to prove they can make high-quality, big-budget indie fare with a top director – and all without having to sign away their rights to a Hollywood studio. 

 ***Rush* is released in the UK on 13 September and will be reviewed in the next issue**

IL CINEMA RITROVATO

THE GOLD OF BOLOGNA



Superhuman effort: director Allan Dwan's 400-film career closed with 1961's *Most Dangerous Man Alive*

Bologna's festival of rediscoveries cast the spotlight on Hollywood journeyman Allan Dwan and neorealist Vittorio De Sica

By Geoff Andrew

The cornucopia of rarities, rediscoveries and restorations at this year's edition of Bologna's Il Cinema Ritrovato festival was par for the course in terms of range, variety and interest value. The one cause for complaint was that the programme's richness made it difficult to choose between movies, many of which played just once. One could either simply sample here and there or focus on specific strands; this year I opted for the latter strategy, and while I also managed to catch gems as disparate as Victor Sjöström's *Ingeborg Holm* (1913), Nicholas Ray's newly restored *The Lusty Men* (1952) and Vera Chytilová's *Daisies* (*Sedmikrásky*, 1966), I mostly concentrated on the retrospectives devoted to Allan Dwan and Vittorio De Sica.

The former – whose directing career began with one-reel westerns in 1911 and ended half a century later with *Most Dangerous Man Alive* (1961), the B movie Wim Wenders's characters plan to remake in *The State of Things* (1982) – is not particularly easy to come to critical grips with, given that he made around 400

films (if we include the early shorts), only a fraction of which survive. Bologna's selection (curated by the festival's artistic director Peter von Bagh together with critic Dave Kehr, an expert on Hollywood's lesser-known *metteurs en scène*) seemed designed to provide an overview by outlining the various phases of Dwan's long career, mixing rarities with films that demonstrate a particular aspect of his style, while completely omitting familiar titles like the 1949 hit *Sands of Iwo Jima*.

Hence, of Dwan's several collaborations with Douglas Fairbanks, Bologna presented not the comparatively well-known *Robin Hood* (1922) but *The Iron Mask* (1929) – a typically Fairbanksian blend of *Boys' Own* heroics and meticulous historical reconstruction – and, more interestingly, *A Modern Musketeer* (1917), a massively athletic, wittily ironic updating of the D'Artagnan myth to 1920s Kansas and the Grand Canyon. Still more intriguing were the opening 20 minutes of *He Comes up Smiling* (1918), where Fairbanks's spectacularly gymnastic cross-town pursuit of a flyaway canary provides a dazzlingly inventive prologue to the main story of the now sadly lost film. It's Dwan's dynamic handling of such scenes that won him a reputation as an action specialist.

Watching some of his early one-reelers (1911's *The Ranch Girl* and five 1912 titles

including the very impressive *The Thief's Wife*), one can see Dwan gaining in confidence and compositional expertise; but what's also notable is the variety of his narrative approaches, from near-abstraction to the highly specific, from the pacy to the near-contemplative – despite his deploying, in film after film, the same few actors and locations. His work with another star of the silent era, Gloria Swanson, included both lavish romantic drama (*Zaza*, 1923) and deft comedy (the superb New York subway sequence in *Manhandled*, 1924). Indeed, one might even argue that Dwan's most enduring and distinctive quality was his very adaptability. In the early sound years at Fox he made



L'oro di Napoli (*The Gold of Naples*)

both the moodily chiaroscuro if enjoyably implausible 'poetic' thriller *While Paris Sleeps* (1932) and the perky, pleasingly tortuous jewel-heist pic *Fifteen Maiden Lane* (1936), both of which display his dependence on decent scripts and actors and his ability to tell a story briskly, clearly and with not a little wit.

In the 1950s, like many others, Dwan turned often to the western; *Silver Lode* (1954), an atypically bitter account of social breakdown clearly inspired by the McCarthy witchhunts, is one of the best, and one of ten films made for producer Benedict Bogeaus. The last of these was *Most Dangerous Man Alive*. With its blunt editing and acting, its near-allegorical script and bizarre B-movie locations, this bleak blend of vengeful crime drama and nuclear-era sci-fi is strangely reminiscent of the early one-reelers.

If Dwan has been widely characterised as a purveyor of fun genre fare, Vittorio De Sica – best known outside Italy as a director, though he was also a fine and prolific popular actor – is often thought of as somewhat conventionally arty and a little grimly sentimental: a neorealist rather less interesting than Rossellini. Again, Bologna's decision to focus on titles less well known than *Shoeshine*, *Bicycle Thieves*, *Miracle in Milan* and *Umberto D* refutes any such simplistic assessment. Of the films I saw, three precede that famous quartet, yet each in its own way

With blunt editing and bizarre B-movie locations, Dwan's nuclear-era sci-fi is reminiscent of his early one-reelers

is quite remarkable. *Teresa Venerdì* (1941), an incisively funny comedy about a directionless doctor (De Sica) entangled with three very different women, demonstrates his sure sense of pace and extraordinary skill with actors. *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*, 1943) – a boy's-eye view of adultery and marital tensions – and *La porta del cielo* (*The Gate of Heaven*, 1945) – about pilgrims travelling by train to a shrine where they hope their various misfortunes will miraculously vanish – offer impressive and deeply moving evidence of De Sica's desire to explore social, emotional and ethical realities, honestly and unsentimentally.

And while *L'oro di Napoli* (*The Gold of Naples*, 1954) is later and includes the likes of Silvana Mangano, Totò and (in her breakthrough role) Sophia Loren, its sextet of vignettes – some comic, some tragic, some precariously poised in-between – evoking the impoverished predicament and robust temperament of the Neapolitans shows no decline in De Sica's artistry or creative audacity. Indeed, a near-wordless episode simply depicting a funeral procession for a child, and an account of a prostitute's wedding day are notable not only for their dramatic subtlety and power but for their bold, elastic and highly expressive editing. De Sica frequently holding the camera on 'dead moments' for far longer than the norm. At times like these, his quest for the truth can be shattering in its effect. ☺

MIDNIGHT SUN LAPP OF HONOUR

Scandinavian documentaries and archival treasures come together in a unique festival in the Arctic Circle

By Richard Porton

Towards the end of the Midnight Sun Film Festival, festival director Peter von Bagh took me aside to ask me if I was happy. "That's even more important than the films," he observed. It's quite a contrast with the rapacious assumptions of most film festivals, where dealmaking involving sales agents and distributors usually takes precedence over artistic quality and, yes, happiness. Midnight Sun, which convenes north of the Arctic Circle in Sodankylä, Lapland, is a noncompetitive event that is as devoted to showcasing archival prints of older films as it is to highlighting noteworthy new features.

Such cosmopolitanism does not, however, preclude recognition of local filmmakers; several of the festival's most striking offerings were in fact Finnish. Mika Ronkainen's documentary *Finnish Blood*, *Swedish Heart* deals with the rootlessness experienced by Finnish workers who sought employment in Sweden in the post-World War II era, and the similarly gnawing sense of displacement endured by their children. The audience was visibly moved by Ronkainen's cannily structured film, a road movie revolving around Finnish rock musician Kai Latvala's bittersweet return to Sweden, the country where he spent his formative childhood years, with his cantankerous father.

Von Bagh's own *Remembrance – A Small Movie About Oulu in the 1950s* proved equally impressive. Alternately nostalgic and sardonic, it finds von Bagh – known for inventive essay films such as *Helsinki*, *Forever* that interweave found footage and lyrical voiceover – in an autobiographical frame of mind. In addition to heading up both Midnight Sun and Bologna's Il Cinema Ritrovato, von Bagh is a bestselling film historian and former executive director of the Finnish Film Archive; here, his blunt musings on the complex history of Oulu, the provincial city where he discovered literature and film, offer avenues for exploring disparate topics. The digressive freedom of the essay film enables him to reflect on his childhood distance from his aloof father, chief physician at the local mental hospital, the origins of his lifelong cinephilia, and the erosion of community and solidarity at a juncture in the early 21st century when Finland has embraced consumerism. Above all, it's a homage to an era that preceded our "brave digital era"; a time when spectators were still familiar with the "flickering beauty of real film".

'The Last Sentence' merges the conventions of the biopic with Bergmanesque meditations on marital infidelity



The Last Sentence

True to form, von Bagh demands that Midnight Sun screens films in their original formats and strives to acquire pristine 35mm prints of classic movies. Whereas other festivals such as Cannes relegate older films to often-neglected sidebars, Midnight Sun opened with Marco Bellocchio's *Fists in the Pocket* (1965); the Italian director's debut feature, still retains the power to shock contemporary audiences. A near-operatic saga of a dysfunctional family brought down by the machinations of its most unhinged member, it remains invigoratingly blasphemous and disturbing.

While Bellocchio's willingness to shatter taboos and offend audiences reflected the convulsions of the Italian New Left, the films of Jan Troell, another director Midnight Sun honoured with a mini-retrospective, hark back to a gentler tendency within politically committed cinema. Troell's films exemplify a once-vital strain of liberal-humanist uplift that now seems innovative expressly because it is nearly extinct. His latest film *The Last Sentence* merges the conventions of the biopic with Bergmanesque meditations on marital infidelity. A bit more stolid than major Troell films such as *The Emigrants* (1971) and *Everlasting Moments* (2008), *The Last Sentence* still delivers old-fashioned narrative pleasure by immersing the audience in the life of a crusading liberal newspaper editor whose political courage in combating Hitler is somewhat undermined by his personal shortcomings.

The resourceful programmer Olaf Möller regaled Midnight Sun's Anglophiles with an idiosyncratic selection of post-1945 British war films. Marked by a "fragile masculinity" embodied by such key actors as Dirk Bogarde, Alec Guinness and John Mills, these restrained epics function as allegories of a society that claimed to loosen class boundaries while remaining staunchly committed to reformulating hidebound nationalistic traditions. A particularly striking example of the genre's contradictory ideological currents is Lewis Gilbert's Nelson-era naval melodrama *H.M.S. Defiant* (aka *Damn the Defiant!*, 1962), which initially appears to celebrate a mutiny, even though the mutineers eventually rally round the Union Jack with nationalistic brio.

Although Lapland may have been an odd setting to ponder the incongruities of film genre and the British class system, this kind of ecumenical programming defines Midnight Sun's cinephilic agenda. ☺

HOME CINEMA

While in recent years Hollywood has turned its back on serious drama, US cable series like *The Wire* and *Mad Men* have scaled new heights. At the same time, directors who made their name on the big screen have been embracing the creative opportunities offered by the small: Jane Campion with *Top of the Lake* is just the latest example. But is this phenomenon just a culmination of the cross-fertilisation between the two media that's been going on since the 1950s? After all, TV has always provided a space where directors eager to work on the big screen could learn their craft. What's less often looked at is the reverse route whereby established masters of cinema – Hitchcock, Welles, Fellini – turned their hands to the distinctive formats of TV. Though the results are less celebrated than their big-screen movies, they're no less compelling – and more readily available than ever. Over the following pages *S&S* examines the fascinating work made for TV over the past 60 years by the world's greatest filmmakers

Introduction by Henry K. Miller

Television is better than the movies now. Listen to the buzz. Reel off the titles. Haute-watercooler opinion is united on the point, and has been for a while. "TV is where the action is," declared James Wolcott in *Vanity Fair's* May 2012 "TV Issue", and everyone wants a piece. The American cable drama "has reached a point of artistic credibility", wrote James Meek in the *London Review of Books* more recently, "where an editor from a noted US literary imprint complained to me recently of under-contract novelists putting unfinished books to one side in favour of script work on what they hope will be the next *Mad Men*". No one demurred when Steven Soderbergh told Cannes, the seventh art's last redoubt: "TV is really taking control of a conversation that used to be sort of the exclusive domain of movies."

TV has changed, but the conversation has changed more. With that word – he also used "cultural real estate" – Soderbergh evoked the weave of published commentary and actual conversation whose pattern has been transformed by the internet. In theory, that transformation – which coincided with the rise of the cable drama since the late 1990s – should have affected the movies like everything else. In theory, the distinction between 'television' and 'film' should have been erased by technological convergence. But it doesn't feel that way. Despite the scale of the digital change within the film industry, which David Bordwell has compared with the transition to sound, to visit a cinema is

to return to the analogue age. TV, meanwhile, has kept time with the polyrhythms of digital media, with the tweet and the long tail.

A show like *Game of Thrones* (2011-) will control the conversation, at least among 'multi-screeners', even as it is being broadcast; then, the next day, through its recappers. Recaps (annotated synopses), feeding and feeding off social media, are now so numerous that *New York Magazine's* Vulture website has taken to providing recaps of the recaps. In a good week, something else will happen – as when the London freesheet *Metro* ran a story about the ethics of recapping on its front page – that will keep the conversation going until the next episode, when the cycle begins again. Some movies might generate that amount of hot air for a fortnight, but few good ones – and none for three months. The release of the box-set, by which time the literary reviews will have caught on and academic symposia will have been convened, generates yet more.

It was the box-set, followed by downloads and streaming services, that made this conversation possible – perhaps especially in Britain, which never had HBO directly. If TV on unaesthetic VHS cassettes, sold two episodes at a time, was never

TV is not just taking control of a conversation from the movies. It is absorbing talent from the same source

very practical, the DVD box-set and its equivalents have become the primary way in which some shows are seen. *The Wire*, famously, was barely known here even five years after its 2002 debut, and wasn't broadcast by the BBC until 2009, after the series had ended – and then nightly, ending after midnight, in an awkward pastiche of the box-set experience. Its creator David Simon has said that it only "started selling DVDs hand over fist in 2010, 2011". Movies have achieved that kind of slow-burn success before, but none recently.

RUNNING THE SHOW

The dark, brooding, complex heroes of the hour-long drama are showrunners like Simon, the titular protagonists of Brett Martin's new book *Difficult Men: Behind the Scenes of a Creative Revolution*. "In the hands of these all-powerful, all-knowing showrunners," Martin writes, "television became nothing less than the dominant art form of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the equivalent of what the Big Novel had been to the 1960s and the 'American New Wave' cinema had been to the 1970s." Showrunners are typically head writers, and as Martin says, "The TV revolution is in many respects a story of writers asked to act in very unwriterly ways: to become collaborators, managers, businessmen, celebrities." But it is also a story of film directors – some of them veterans of the American New Wave – undergoing a parallel mutation.

TV is not just taking control of a conversation from the movies. It is





← absorbing talent from the same source. Soderbergh went to Cannes this year with *Behind the Candelabra*, a film HBO produced after the studios turned it down; before the festival ended there were reports that he was 'in talks' to direct a series for HBO's sister channel Cinemax. Steven Spielberg has said that *Lincoln* almost went the same way as *Candelabra*, and has announced plans to turn Kubrick's unrealised Napoleon project into a miniseries. Jane Campion and Todd Haynes directed all or most of *Top of the Lake* and *Mildred Pierce* (2011), respectively. Cary Fukunaga is doing the same with *True Detective*. Neil Jordan was showrunner on *The Borgias* (2011-). Martin Scorsese directed the pilot episode of *Boardwalk Empire* (2010-) and maintains ties with the series; likewise David Fincher on this year's *House of Cards*. The Coen brothers are producing a spin-off from *Fargo*. Filmmakers of comparable stature – Spike Lee (*Shark*), Gus Van Sant (*Boss*), Alfonso Cuarón (*Believe*), Alexander Payne (*Hung*) – have directed pilots, and more have directed episodes. And in the background are the series that didn't happen, like Noah Baumbach's adaptation of *The Corrections*.

Dalliances between the big and small screens go at least as far back as Hitchcock, of course. Even before the arrival of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* in 1990, John Sayles – who crossed over to create the legal drama *Shannon's Deal* (1990-91) – explained that *Hill Street Blues* (1981-87) and *Miami Vice* (1984-90) had convinced him that "the medium's bonds of format were loosening". David Lavery, editor of books on the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Deadwood* (2004-06), dates what he calls the "television is better than the movies' meme" to an *Entertainment Weekly* cover story published in 1995, the year Quentin Tarantino directed the penultimate episode of the first season of NBC's *ER* (1994-2009). At the same time, the same network's *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993-99), based on David Simon's book, had episodes directed by Kathryn Bigelow, Mary Harron, Lisa Cholodenko, Barbara Kopple and Whit Stillman, among others.

Despite this change in mood, no one then spoke of the cable drama – which began in its modern form with HBO's *Oz*, created by *Homicide* showrunner Tom Fontana in 1997 – displacing the movies. Gradually, however, it has become a conversational axiom that the major studios have stopped making films for grown-ups, that the independent sector is more precarious than ever before, and that as a result, as Lynch now says, "the art-house has gone to cable" – not only HBO, but also Showtime, FX, AMC and Starz; and not only to cable, but also now to Netflix. The balance has shifted so that the dabbling directors seem less like guests, more like exiles or refugees. Thus Lodge Kerrigan, whose last commercially distributed feature *Keane* was made in 2004, has turned his hand to episodes of *Homeland* (2011-) and the US version of *The Killing* (2011-).

They're called showrunners for a reason, though, and there is little sign that guest directors have much room for manoeuvre. All series demand continuity, most obviously in characterisation, and cable dramas, which eke out their stories over seasons rather than episodes, demand an even larger measure of it.



Back in the day: Stringer Bell (Idris Elba) and Avon Barksdale (Wood Harris) in David Simon's *The Wire*

The "visual syntax" of the ill-fated horse-racing series *Luck* (2011-12), it was reported in *The New York Times*, was codified by showrunner Michael Mann "in a three-ring binder in which everything from shooting angles to lighting was dictated", apparently even for name directors like Phillip Noyce; the editing and scoring were also Mann's province. *Luck* may be an unusual case, but the 'TV revolution' has made writer-directors like Kerrigan act in un-writerly-directorly ways.

Those guest directors who do manage to impose themselves – as Mike Figgis did by introducing handheld shots and a freeze-frame to *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) – only demonstrate the virtues of TV drama's unsung stalwarts, the likes of Dan Attias, Allen Coulter, Alan Taylor and Tim Van Patten. Van Patten, who directed 20 episodes of *The Sopranos* as well as instalments of *The Wire*, has never made a single feature – which is to say that the best of all series didn't have much need for guest directors. In 2006 Alain Resnais, interviewed in *Positif*, praised the virtuoso *mise en scène* and *décapage* of Kim Manners, director of 52 episodes of *The X-Files* (1993-2002), adding: "In *Millennium*, *The Shield*, *The Sopranos*, 24, and others, I find the cinematic syntax more rich and inventive than in the majority of cinema."

While feature production has headed north to Vancouver and Toronto, without being set in either, cable drama has ventured into the streets of New Orleans (*Treme*) and the New Mexico desert (*Breaking Bad*), and had time to explore. Simon's work in particular has ranged over whole cities, accumulating a density of texture that no feature could contain – though a few, like Sayles's *City of Hope* (1991), have tried. There is a danger, however, that the argument that serial TV's narrative

Simon's work in particular has ranged over whole cities, accumulating a density of texture that no feature could contain

dilation makes possible closer examination of character (aired more than once during the documentary series *America in Primetime*, broadcast by the BBC earlier this year) becomes an excuse for shapelessness and repetition, as has happened with *Mad Men* (2007-). There is still something to be said for concentration, both as a creative principle and as a viewing practice.

Part of what the box-set offers is convenience, for better and worse. The rise in TV production standards has kept in step with the rising quality of modern TV sets (and other screens), and the experiential gap with cinema has narrowed – or narrowed enough not to matter enough. The big flatscreen is almost as good as the little big screens in the multiplex, it is true; but it is nonetheless striking how often the proliferating literature on TV's superiority to movies turns to the theme of how unpleasant cinemagoing has (supposedly) become. The home-viewer is free from the multi-screener and the snackers, while free to multi-screen and snack with impunity. Above these considerations, the box-set offers freedom from the burden of choice. One series, standardised at practically the perfect length for work-night viewing, might last a few months – all based on one decision.

The Sopranos grew out of one of the many spec feature scripts David Chase wrote while labouring in network television, and its success did not diminish his desire to get into pictures – albeit small ones. The irony is that by the time he made the break, with last year's 60s-set rock-band drama *Not Fade Away* (barely released in the US and not at all here), the cognoscenti had decided – partly on the strength of *The Sopranos* – that small movies were too much effort. After all, they can never dominate the conversation – as it is imagined, at least, by the old-media establishment, keen to exert its grip on the new. But the best shows, and the best movies, don't need to be sustained by an outdated fantasy of what 'everyone' is talking about. Within the longer conversation there is surely room for both.

50 FILM DIRECTORS ON TV

Please note: this is an edited version of a longer list of directors and their television works – from Chantal Akerman to Robert Zemeckis – that will be appearing online later in August, see bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

ROBERT ALTMAN

When *M*A*S*H* (1969) rocket-launched Altman's cinema career, few among its largely young and hip audience realised that the director had previously churned out hours of popular TV. In truth much of his work on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Whirlybirds*, *Bonanza* and the like has defeated auteurist critics looking for 'the Altman touch'. But after the (mis-represented) failure of *Popeye* (1980), he was obliged to return to the smaller screen with filmed plays and, for the burgeoning HBO, *Tanner '88*. Collaborating with satirist Garry Trudeau, Altman created a fictional presidential candidate, Jack Tanner, and placed him right inside the actual upcoming election campaigns. Deploying his cast in his familiar improvisatory way (suave Altman regular Michael Murphy played Tanner; a young Cynthia Nixon his daughter), the director mixed in real people with his actors, used lightweight video cameras and continually developed the script while shooting.

This blurring of fictional boundaries was picked up by *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-98) and others, while the director deployed it himself back on the big screen with *The Player* (1992) and *Prêt-à-Porter* (1994). At the end of his career Altman reprised "probably the most significant thing I have done" with *Tanner on Tanner* (2004), in which the former candidate's daughter makes a documentary on her father, adding another dimension to the game of mirrors. **David Thompson**

MARIO BAVA

In constant demand as a director, DP and special-effects technician, Bava didn't find himself in need of TV work till a crisis struck the Italian film industry in the late 1960s. He began with a series of Baci Perugia

(chocolate kisses) commercials, now available for viewing on YouTube, which are startling in the free rein they give to the auteur's hand.

His only proper TV movie is *La Venere d'Ille* (1978), based on the short story 'La Vénus d'Ille' by Carmen author Prosper Mérimée. Filmed in 16mm as an episode of a projected series, *The Devil's Notebook: Fantastic Tales of the 19th Century*, it stars Marc Porel as an artist summoned to a rural estate to confirm a recently unearthed bronze statue of Venus as a masterpiece. His visit coincides with the nuptials of his sponsor's roguish son and a neighbouring woman (Daria Nicolodi), which invite supernatural intrusion when the prospective groom places his ring on the statue's finger for safekeeping. *La Venere d'Ille* was Bava's last film and its bright period rural setting and Nicolodi's resemblance to the statue suggest a kind of 'White Sunday' (a counterweight to his 1960 classic *Black Sunday*), bookending

his directorial career perfectly. The series was not picked up and Bava's episode was not broadcast until 1980, in acknowledgement of his recent death. **Tim Lucas**

INGMAR BERGMAN

It's hard to imagine a world auteur loftier and more pure-minded than Bergman – one more able in his heyday to craft intense personal cinema. But he also saw the advantages of the small screen, famously with the six-part, five-hour miniseries *Scenes from a Marriage* (*Scener ur ett äktenskap*, 1973) and the similarly structured *Fanny and Alexander* (1982). With both those densely dramatic epics you see Bergman opening the throttle, released from the confines of the two-hour story and free to work on a Balzacian scale.

In fact Bergman had been doing TV all along, happily engaging with Sveriges Television (Sweden's national network) as far back as 1957, shooting an hour-long version of Hjalmar Bergman's play *Mr Sleeman Is Coming* (*Herr Sleeman kommer*) the same year as *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*. During the last quarter-century of his life Bergman made films almost exclusively for TV. The intimacy the medium offered fitted his eye (some great directors couldn't work comfortably in such a small space, but Bergman's films were always about the explosions happening behind an actor's eyes), and the Scandinavian appetite for bell-jar melodrama and classic literature suited passions he couldn't always sell to international distributors. Of course, Bergman was almost from the beginning in the privileged position of using the TV industry for his own purposes, and as his TV films have been distributed all over the world, from *The Rite* (*Riten*, 1969)

to *Saraband* (2003), they are Bergman films first and foremost, regardless of provenance. **Michael Atkinson**

TIM BURTON

One would hazard that budgetary constraints were a key roadblock to florid fabulist Tim Burton ever becoming a successful TV director. Yet it's one of his early small-screen works that contains the most vivid auteurist blueprint for Burton's ensuing cinematic project. Made in 1986, the 44-minute 'Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp' is his auspicious entry into 1980s American family series *Faerie Tale Theatre*, which had each episode presented by a muslin-clad Shelley Duvall, addressing the camera from atop a mountain and in front of a scorching nuclear sunset.

Though it's fascinating for its self-aware employment of ham performances, awkward smash zooms and Ed Wood-style horror effects, Burton's 'Aladdin' also has a ball with the gaudy production design and the blue-screen backdrops, even at one point using his own drawings as spooky cave paintings. With James Earl Jones as the roistering Genie (clearly inspired by Rex Ingram's cackling Djinn in Michael Powell's 1940 *The Thief of Bagdad*) and Leonard Nimoy as a hook-nosed Moroccan magician, it comes across as a trial run for Disney's suspiciously identical take on the material in *Aladdin* (1992).

Also in 1986, for the revived *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Burton helmed a colour remake of a 1964 *Alfred Hitchcock Hour* episode, 'The Jar', in which he has more fun casting funny shadows off Griffin Dunne's bouffant hairstyle than he does drawing out the fine textures of Ray Bradbury's source material. **David Jenkins**

JANE CAMPION

Currently screening on BBC2, Campion's *Top of the Lake* (2013) may have been produced as a seven-part crime series for the small screen but it is in every way an epic work. The intensity of the performances by Elizabeth Moss, Holly Hunter and Peter Mullan and the urgency of the drama are scaled to match the vast, primal New Zealand setting. I've watched it both on TV and projected in a cinema, and while it's compelling in both situations, in the former it plays like melodrama, in the latter like a feminist myth for our times.

In her two earlier made-for-TV films, Campion went in the opposite direction, playing on the intimacy of TV and its novelistic potential for making characters seem like part of your imaginary family. *2 Friends* (1986) explores the relationship between two young women, a subject to which she returned in her first cinema feature *Sweetie* (1989). Certainly



Robert Altman Collaborating with satirist Garry Trudeau, Altman created a fictional presidential candidate, Jack Tanner (Michael Murphy), and placed him right inside the actual upcoming election campaigns. **David Thompson**

radical as TV storytelling, *2 Friends* begins after the loss of the friendship in question has left both teenagers bereft, and then works its way backwards in time to reveal how over the course of nine months the once-bosom buddies took increasingly divergent paths, impelled by temperament, parenting and class. The structure produces a compelling, dramatic irony – the more we know about the girls, the less aware they are of what will happen to them.

The miniseries *An Angel at My Table* (1990), based on the autobiography of New Zealand novelist Janet Frame, was also released in cinemas in a somewhat shortened form, despite Campion's fears that its plain visual style, compelled by budget and schedule, wouldn't register well on the big screen. But this style proved a remarkably effective correlative for what is strongest in Frame's own writing: how direct and personal it is while utterly lacking in narcissism. Certainly the choices Campion made in her first experience of translating the life of a writer to the screen would figure two decades later in her Keats biopic *Bright Star* (2009).

Amy Taubin

JOHN CASSAVETES

Cassavetes was in the first wave of actors to make their mark in live TV drama, appearing in up to a hundred shows between 1954 and 1959 for directors like Sidney Lumet and John Frankenheimer. Towards the end of 1959 he also directed several episodes of his hit TV series *Johnny Staccato*. His feature-directing debut *Shadows* was already in the can but this was his first experience directing a professional cast and crew. The episodes reveal Cassavetes flexing his muscles, within the expressionist noir stylings of the show.

One of the shows regular writers, Richard Carr, went on to collaborate with Cassavetes on the screenplay for his first Hollywood film *Too Late Blues* (1961), which also featured *Staccato* producer Everett Chambers in a key acting role. A movie about a jazz musician tormented by the prospect of selling out, *Too Late Blues* suggested Cassavetes's own anxieties about a Hollywood career and his ambivalence towards TV stardom.

While *Johnny Staccato* is available on DVD (region 1), Cassavetes's other directing one-offs for TV are extremely rare but reputedly excellent. In 1962 and 1963 he directed two 25-minute dramas for *The Lloyd Bridges Show*. 'My Daddy Can Lick Your Daddy' (written by Robert Towne) is a 1920s boxing story starring Gary Lockwood and Lelia Goldoni from *Shadows*; 'A Pair of Boots' is an American Civil War parable with Lawrence Tierney, Beau Bridges and Seymour Cassel.

Also in 1963, he directed and starred in the 30-minute one-man play *Flip Side*, about a self-loathing radio DJ cracking up on air. Three years later, he wrote and directed the hour-long *In Pursuit of Excellence*, about an ambitious, overachieving but deeply ambivalent college student. Splenetic and intense, these curios are evidence of both Cassavetes's accomplishment and his growing sense of frustration at the limitations of the medium and the compromises demanded by commercialism. Cassavetes may have taken something from the 'lightning in a bottle' electricity of live TV drama in the 1950s, but it was above all his rejection of the pre-packaged quality of 60s TV drama (and Hollywood cinema too) that fuelled his own films. **Tom Charity**

JACK CLAYTON

Clayton worked exclusively for the big screen until the very last entry in his filmography, *Memento Mori*, which debuted on BBC2 in 1992, five years after his final feature *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* (1987) and three years before his death. But far from being a low-key swansong made on a limited budget, *Memento Mori* is one of his finest and subtlest pieces, long-gestating (he'd read Muriel Spark's 1959 novel on its original publication) and with a cast to die for – if that's not an inappropriate metaphor for a piece so suffused with the anticipation and inevitability of death.

It begins with Stephanie Cole's understandably alarmed dowager receiving a mysterious phone call whose only message is: "Remember you must die." Similar calls are made to acquaintances played by Renée Asherson, Cyril Cusack, Maurice Denham and Michael Hordern, which naturally trigger speculation as to the caller's identity and motivation – the suspects include Maggie Smith's blackmail-minded housekeeper, but is she capable of murder? If it sounds decidedly Agatha Christie in synopsis, the mystery's solution is more metaphysical than deductive, and Clayton's elegant direction offers regular reminders that he directed the

supremely atmospheric *The Innocents* three decades earlier. **Michael Brooke**

CHARLES CRICHTON

Crichton tends to be remembered as an Ealing comedy specialist; he made five of them, including two of the best, *Hue and Cry* (1947) and *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951), as well as the lightweight comic segment of *Dead of Night* (1945). However, not only were his comedies outnumbered by his films in other genres, but his 16 years at Ealing (the first three as an editor) pale beside his quarter-century and more as a director of TV dramas, almost all of them for ITV.

Crichton made his small-screen debut with a 1957 adaptation of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* for ITV's *Play of the Week*, but worked overwhelmingly in filmed series – from *Danger Man* to *Dick Turpin* via the likes of *Man in a Suitcase*, *The Avengers*, *The Strange Report*, *The Protectors*, *Space: 1999* and *The Professionals* – which had a zest, style and international outlook that was poles apart from the Little England modesty that characterised too much of Ealing's declining-years output.

At times in the 1960s and 70s, ITV's assorted studios, particularly the Elstree base of Lew Grade's ITC, became home to a burgeoning diaspora of Ealing veterans, many of whom seized the chance of a small-screen career when film offers dried up. At one time or other Crichton might have run into such old colleagues as Charles Frend, Leslie Norman and Basil Dearden. In the late 1950s and early 60s these old Ealing hands (alongside other film industry refugees like Roy Ward Baker) helped fashion a glossy, attention-grabbing, jetsetting brand of filmed drama that gave ITV a popular edge over an often hidebound and studio-bound BBC. **Mark Duguid**

DAVID CRONENBERG

Between his semi-underground films *Stereo* (1969) and *Crimes of the Future* (1970) and his startling exploitation breakthrough *Shivers* (1975), David Cronenberg shot documentary fillers for Canadian TV. For a

show called *Program X* he directed 'Secret Weapons' (1972): a science-fiction piece about an oppressive pharmaceuticals company, it shares the concerns of his mind-stretching features. As director-for-hire, he made a couple of episodes of the twist-in-the-tale 1976 anthology series *Peep Show*: the crank-caller drama 'The Victim' and the identity-warping ghost story 'The Lie Chair'. His most personal TV work is 'The Italian Machine', a half-hour film for a series called *Teleplay*, which prefigures the mechanical fetishes of *Crash* as a beautiful Ducati motorcycle is put on exhibition as an artwork in the home of a rich man who will never ride it, exciting the envy and anarchic interest of a group of gearheads who set out to 'rescue' the bike.

An odd coda to Cronenberg's TV career came with a few seemingly random episodes of shot-in-Canada TV series – 'The Faith Healer', for *Friday the 13th: The Series* (1988) and a couple of cases in the true-crime courtroom drama *Scales of Justice* (1990) – undertaken just to keep his hand in. **Kim Newman**

GEORGE CUKOR

An invaluable mainstay of the old Hollywood studio system, Cukor made the last two of his ten films with Katharine Hepburn for TV: *Love Among the Ruins* (1975) and *The Corn Is Green* (1978). In between these films for TV, Cukor came to grief directing a feature in Russia, *The Blue Bird* (1976) – a nightmarish shoot that foundered on the technical amateurishness of the crew. So it could be said that TV allowed this great director a temporary re-creation of the kind of smooth studio ambience that had helped him create his finest movies.

Love Among the Ruins is one of his best works, a look at romance renewed in old age that is lovingly built around doted-over performances by Hepburn and Laurence Olivier. The controlled TV-studio circumstances allow Cukor to stage scenes using the kind of long takes he increasingly favoured, and the whole film shimmers with the



John Cassavetes in *Johnny Staccato*



George Cukor's *Love Among the Ruins*

excited energy of a heavily seasoned pro given one last chance to exercise his art. If *The Corn Is Green* is less successful, it's only because the material is too pious for Cukor's razor-sharp, unapologetically posturing taste, though again he focuses his attention on Hepburn's performance so that every one of her mannerisms is brought out to a burnished glow of justified self-love. **Dan Callahan**

JOHN DAHL

The crown prince of 1990s neo-noir, Dahl had back-to-back critical success with the blackly comic *Kill Me Again* (1989) and *Red Rock West* (1992) and foul-mouthed femme-fatale hit *The Last Seduction* (1993), but slid mostly off the movie radar after big-budget failure *The Great Raid* (2005). However, he's parlayed his taut, economical facility with the genre and his affinity for darker themes into considerable success in cable dramas, particularly for Showtime, the home of morally bankrupt protagonists and twisty TV noir. His noticeably sophisticated episodes of world-weary adult comedy *Californication* (2007-) emphasise redemptive longing as well as laughs. He adroitly wrangles the multi-plot melodramas and demanding season arcs of *Dexter* (2006-), his command of pace, suspense and performances helping to sustain a well-worn format.

Unable to create a dull shot but never grandstanding, he's been doing his best TV work yet on the wily blood-soaked backwoods procedural *Justified* (2010-). Tense, classic-western-worthy compositions of a key death and a gangster confrontation in season 4's episode 'Outlaw' even moved critic Matt Zoller Seitz to tweet screenshots, admiring the "quiet master" Dahl for his Fordian finesse. If TV's writer-producer showrunners paint the big canvas and the broad strokes, Dahl's adroitly constructed scenes make him a maestro of the fine details. **Kate Stables**

JOE DANTE

The most subversive of mainstream directors, Dante has paralleled his feature work with a career in TV that has, ironically, resulted in some of his best-realised achievements. While poised between his first hit (*The Howling*, 1980) and his first collaboration with Spielberg (*Twilight Zone: The Movie*, 1983), he directed two of the very best *Police Squad!* episodes, particularly 'Testimony of Evil (Dead Men Don't Laugh)'. His work for the Spielberg-produced *Amazing Stories* yielded 'Boo!' (a satire of Old/New Hollywood that gave him the chance to work with Eddie Bracken and Evelyn Keyes) and 'The Greibble' (with Hayley Mills plagued by a state-of-the-art Rob Bottin funny monster), while *Twilight Zone's* 'Shadow Man'



Jane Campion 'Top of the Lake' may have been produced for the small screen but it is an epic work. The intensity of the performances and the urgency of the drama are scaled to match the vast New Zealand setting. *Amy Taubin*

finds him tipping his hat to Mario Bava's *Baron Blood*. In 1991, he signed on to direct five episodes of the proto-teen-paranormal series *Eerie, Indiana*, whose young protagonists were cut from the same cloth as those in *Gremlins*, *Explorers* and *Matinee*.

In 1994, Dante's career became more dependent on TV work. It was then he made his first TV movie: Showtime's *Runaway Daughters*, a remake of an AIP drive-in classic from the 1950s, which gave Dick Miller the only real lead role of his career and Roger Corman his funniest, career-best supporting role. 'Lightning', an amiable, self-contained western story filmed for the limited series *Picture Windows*, starred Brian Keith as an ageing prospector. An HBO movie, *The Second Civil War* (1997), turned out to be Dante's most political entertainment: evocative of the best work of Preston Sturges, it's a zany but plausible account of events that bring the state of Idaho to the brink of secession from the United States.

But Dante reserved his real gunpowder for two original short features scripted by Sam Hamm for the Showtime series *Masters of Horror*: the award-winning 'Homecoming' (2005), a modern-day *J'Accuse* that prompted a three-minute standing ovation at the Turin Film Festival; and 'The Screwfly Solution' (2006), superficially about a virus that turns men into psychopaths but – more to the point – a powerful indictment of how media and society objectify women and foster psychopathology.

Even Dante's recent episodes of CBS's *CSI: NY* and *Hawaii Five-O* find him capable of turning the most formulaic TV to mutual advantage, raising the bar of such shows while imposing a readily identifiable visual style. **Tim Lucas**

FRANK DARABONT

Darabont directed his first film in 1990, four years before *The Shawshank Redemption*. *Buried Alive* is a juicy suspense potboiler in the tradition of *Les Diaboliques* – made for cable TV. He embellished his industry credentials as a writer on *Tales from the Crypt* (1989-96) and *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (1992-93).

Since making his name in features, Darabont has returned to the small screen to develop AMC's zombie series *The Walking Dead*, writing and directing the feature-length pilot episode, 'Days Gone By'. Despite the show's deserved success Darabont fell out with the studio and quit early in the second series, reportedly over budget tensions.

What's most interesting about his connection with TV, however, was Darabont's highly unusual decision to shoot his fourth theatrical feature, 2007's Stephen King adaptation *The Mist*, with the TV crew with whom he had worked just once, on an episode of the cop series *The Shield* the same year. Evidently not blind to the flaws of his laboriously classical movies *The Green Mile* (1999) and *The Majestic* (2001), Darabont sought to inject energy and spontaneity into his filmmaking – a strategy that Hitchcock also adopted when he made *Psycho*. And it worked. *The Mist* may not be perfect, but it's compelling and alive in a way that few modern American horror films are – and, in the end, truly shocking. It's also Darabont's best work, with the creepy, unsettling 'Days Gone By' a close second.

Darabont's second TV series is due to debut this autumn. Inspired by John Buntin's history *LA Noir: The Struggle for the Soul of America's Most Seductive City*, *Lost Angels* will chart the long-running battle of wits between

mobster Mickey Cohen and LAPD chief William Parker. **Tom Charity**

CLAIRE DENIS

Denis's passion for music – particularly that dirty, driving early-60s garage-band sound – provides the rhythm for her excursions into TV. In her only narrative made for broadcast, *US Go Home* (1994), the teenage protagonists don't just push against the morals and acceptable social spaces of their late-60s existence – they thrash and grind against them in time with The Animals. (One scene of youthful gyration prefigures the dance scene at the end of Denis's later feature *Beau Travail*, but feels like an invasion of privacy akin to secretly reading someone's diary.) Mixing recurring themes of sibling relationships and sensuousness, her (characteristically) light characterisation goes against the typical bombastic TV personality, the crushing silence at the end denying any potential sense of hope. Denis's music videos for Sonic Youth also give primacy to gesture and visceral movement (of the band, of a calico cat on a roof), with 'Jams Run Free' sharing some tonal and elements of *mise en scène* with her 2002 feature *Vendredi soir*.

Denis's other TV work – an episode of the series *Cinéma de notre temps* on Jacques Rivette – feels less obviously her own. Locations dominate (Parisian streets, an art museum), swallowing up the solitary director, contrasting with the flow of stories about his films, elegantly proving their disconnect. **Violet Lucca**

ATOM EGOYAN

Egoayan is one of those rare filmmakers whose TV work for hire has generally proved a neat fit with his personal auteur preoccupations, as witness *Krapp's Last Tape* (2000) starring John Hurt, a UK/Eire commission which not only gave Egoayan the chance to adapt his beloved Samuel Beckett play but also dovetailed with his later installation work *Steenbeckett*. Early commissions included Toronto-shot episodes for US series, notably 'The Final Twist' (1987) for *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, a story about (pre-CGI) 3D special-effects technology that suited Egoayan's interest in the psychology of screen illusion.

Egoayan's one-off half-hour drama *Looking for Nothing* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1988) is a comedy about cultural identity set in an Armenian community centre, and is a lighter outing for themes Egoayan aired in such films as *Ararat* (2002) and his debut *Next of Kin* (1984). Of two adaptations of scripts by Paul Gross, also made for CBC, the IRA-themed *In This Corner* (1985) is outpaced by the feature-length *Gross Misconduct: The Life of Brian Spencer* (1993).

➔ An acidic biopic of a hockey player, complete with violent downfall and complex family history, *Gross Misconduct* is an essay on the Canadian male psyche and a sobering contemplation of the lures of fame. It's also arguably Egoyan's most successful attempt to work within mainstream conventions. **Jonathan Romney**

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

For the sake of brevity, let's focus here on Fassbinder's work in the TV-series format rather than the various one-off films this incredibly prolific director made for TV, most notable of which are *The Stationmaster's Wife* (1970) and *I Only Want You to Love Me* (1976). His first TV miniseries was 1972's *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* (*Acht Stunden sind kein Tag*), an arch subversion of the small-screen saga which took in syndicalist activism, the creation of a housing commune and the intergenerational synergy of the family unit. According to Christian Braad Thomsen's monograph *Fassbinder: The Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, the series marked the first instance of Fassbinder – in the spirit of his material – embracing a more collaborative creative process. Made for WDR television, the series was cancelled (for reasons which remain elusive) three episodes before the completion of its eight-episode run.

Widely considered one of the cinematic highlights of 2010, the restoration of Fassbinder's astonishing and prophetic two-part 1973 sci-fi epic *World on a Wire* (*Welt am Draht*), revealed that even some of his greatest work was yet to be fully discovered. And then, of course, there's his 1980 adaptation of Alfred Döblin's Weimar-era novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, which would surely trouble the upper echelons of any poll attempting to determine the greatest TV series of all time. What's interesting about Fassbinder's TV output is how similar it is to much of his cinema output, as if his small-screen work was unconsciously made for big-screen consumption, and vice versa. **David Jenkins**

FEDERICO FELLINI

Fellini was first drawn to the small screen when NBC approached him to make an hour-long documentary for a series authored by major artists. Fellini adopted a loose format of his own invention, posing as himself accompanied by a film crew in the act of making the film. A *Director's Notebook* (*Block-notes di un regista*, 1969) found him shooting on the sets of his unmade project *Il viaggio* and researching faces and characters for *Satyricon*, with a visit to Marcello Mastroianni

thrown in for good measure.

This style was put to more polished use in *The Clowns* (1970), Fellini's investigation into the mythology of circus folk, with elaborately staged sequences, chaotic interviews and this time a cameo from Anita Ekberg. Although the film was framed for the small screen (4:3), it was shot and scored as if a feature, and was even distributed theatrically after its TV premiere.

As financing his bolder narrative ideas became more problematic, Fellini fell back on this 'essay' approach for *Roma* (1972) and *Intervista* (1987), while *Ginger and Fred* (1985) gave him the opportunity to lampoon – as if that could ever be possible – the crassness of Berlusconi's TV world, creating his own parodies of commercials. Not that he was resistant in his last years to shooting a few of those himself, sadly signing over the Fellini style as his USP. **David Thompson**

DAVID FINCHER

Vince Gilligan, showrunner of *Breaking Bad*, has aired his doubts about the phenomenon of "superstar directors" taking on pilot episodes and leaving with the glory ("what happens after that?"), but David Fincher's participation in *House of Cards*, adapted from the 1990 BBC series with to-camera asides intact, seems to have gone beyond directing. Head writer Beau Willimon has described Fincher as being "minutely involved" in the series, and in charge of post-production. Fincher's subdued colour palette and crisp editing style, immediately apparent in his own two "chapters" (as they were styled), continue throughout the rest of the season.

The series seems also to take up themes from Fincher's recent films, in particular through Kate Mara's character Zoe Barnes, embodiment of corner-cutting web-era journalism. Like *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo's* Lisbeth Sander, played by Mara's sister Rooney in Fincher's 2011

film, Barnes sees no pressing need to digest the material she unearths (more accurately: is fed) for her readers; rather, the best course is to put it up online raw, before anyone else finds it. That Fincher made this strenuously cynical anti-*West Wing* so soon after working with that show's creator Aaron Sorkin on *The Social Network* (2010) adds to the sense of continuity. **Henry K. Miller**

JOHN FORD

Ford was prepared to embrace TV, and in 1948 was reported to be developing a method of televisual filming specially adapted to a "high entertainment tempo". In the end, though, his fidelity to cinema meant he made only four (known) projects for series TV, plus a never-broadcast military documentary.

'Rookie of the Year' (1955), for *Screen Directors Playhouse*, and 'Flashing Spikes' (1962), for *Alcoa Premiere*, were baseball stories prompted by the 1919 Black Sox bribery scandal. Both feature Pat Wayne as a gifted young ballplayer whose future is jeopardised by a journalist on the make. In the former, John Wayne plays a small-town reporter who realises the kid is the son of a disgraced pro (Ward Bond), but instead of exposing him keeps mum out of respect for the fallen hero. In the latter, a louche columnist (Carleton Young), who hates baseball, claims the rookie took a bribe from another banned veteran (James Stewart, excellent), who is merely mentoring the young star. Both films align with Ford's features *Fort Apache* (1948) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) in unveiling a past conspiracy, and both exude a Rockwellian affection for old-timers forgiven or redeemed; 'Flashing Spikes', the more characteristically Fordian, makes the strongest statement about Hollywood blacklisting.

Ford's 1950 feature *Wagon Master* inspired the popular series *Wagon Train* (1957-65), and when he came to shoot 'The Colter Craven Story' (1960) for the series, he integrated hill-crossing footage from the earlier film. It's more explicitly psychological than most Ford: Carleton Young (again) plays a self-pitying alcoholic doctor who overcomes Civil War trauma to perform a Caesarian. The extended flashback concerning Ulysses S. Grant's moral resurrection, with which Ward Bond's trail boss teaches Craven an ethical lesson, is pure Ford.

As 'Michael Morris', Ford's most famous star John Wayne cameo'd as a Ford-like Marine Corps umpire

in Korea in 'Rookie' and as General Sherman at Shiloh in 'Colter Craven'. He was absent, however, from Ford's 'Bamboo Cross' (1955), a 29-minute drama made for the series *Jane Wyman Presents The Fireside Theatre*. A rabidly anti-communist, fervently Catholic story about American nuns menaced in China, it has been described as "grotesque" and "the low point of Ford's career". **Graham Fuller**

JOHN FRANKENHEIMER

Working in the pressure-cooker environment of live broadcasting in the 1950s left its mark on Frankenheimer – and not just the acute lower back pain that he developed (as did the likes of Lumet, Schaffner and Penn). A true 'wunderkind' of American live drama (he made his directorial debut aged just 24), Frankenheimer's febrile, ambitious and dynamic staging made him a giant of the new medium. While he later become known for staging spectacular big-screen action, as in *Grand Prix* (1966) or the Superbowl climax to *Black Sunday* (1976), his handling of intimate scenes – using wide angles to generate compositions in depth, prolong shots and privilege performance – clearly derived from his intimate work on live TV.

Frankenheimer's signature embedding of live video feeds within the *mise en scène*, deployed so brilliantly in *Seven Days in May* (1963), has its clear origins in his TV work, specifically Rod Serling's ferocious backstage drama *The Comedian* (1957). And the director's masterful use of flashback in *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) can certainly be seen in embryonic form in his adept 1958 staging of *Days of Wine and Roses* (an aspect dropped in Blake Edwards's movie remake).

In the 1990s Frankenheimer returned triumphantly to the small screen with a string of biographical productions, winning three consecutive Emmys for *The Burning Season* (1994), on eco-warrior Chico Mendes; *Against the Wall* (1994), a taut depiction of the Attica riots; and *Andersonville* (1996), a controversial epic set in the notorious Civil War POW camp. **Sergio Angelini**

SAMUEL FULLER

In the 1950s, Fuller scored a smattering of peculiar live TV credits, including writer on the children's science-fiction show *Captain Video and His Video Rangers* and executive producer/production manager on *The Colgate Comedy Hour*. In the 1960s, between film projects, he turned his hand to episodic TV, directing '330 Independence S.W.' for *The Dick Powell Show* and 'It Tolls for Thee' for *The Virginian*, and six episodes of the little-remembered



David Fincher's *House of Cards*

railroad western *Iron Horse*.

In later years Fuller landed the odd credit on European TV: his underrated private-eye feature *Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street* (1973) was screened in Europe as an episode of the long-running German-Austrian-Swiss detective show *Tatort*. He made 'The Day of Reckoning', with Assumpta Serna, for the French-UK anthology show *Chillers* (1990), a series based on short stories by Patricia Highsmith. *Tinikling ou 'La madonne et le dragon'* (*The Madonna and the Dragon*, 1989), Fuller's last work as a director, is a French TV movie with Jennifer Beals and Luc Merenda as photojournalists caught up in revolution in the Philippines. His final produced script was a cable-TV remake of 1950s juvenile delinquency B picture *Girls in Prison* (1994), directed by John McNaughton. **Kim Newman**

JEAN-LUC GODARD

Godard has been interested in TV since the 1950s, and has consistently argued that it could be extraordinary if used imaginatively. Since the late 60s he has made a phenomenal quantity of work for TV, beginning with *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) and abrasive Dziga Vertov Group films such as *British Sounds* (1969) and *Lotte in Italia* (1969). There followed his two monumental practical and theoretical investigations of TV, in which he and Anne-Marie Miéville thoroughly dismantled its conventions and forms: *6x2 sur et sous la communication* (1976) and *France tour détourné deux enfants* (1978). Comprising over 15 hours of programmes, these series remain among the most formally inventive and conceptually richest material ever made for TV.

Since the 1980s, Godard has directed a considerable range of further TV work: video essays, such as *Changer d'image* (1982) and *Soft and Hard* (co-directed by Miéville, 1985); political pamphlets such as *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1992); idiosyncratic advertisements; a music video; made-for-TV films, such as *Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerce de cinéma* (1986), *Le dernier mot* (1988), and *Allemagne, année 90 neuf zéro* (1991); and of course *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98), which contains a mournful account of the usurpation of cinema by TV in the 20th century. **Michael Witt**

WALTER HILL

In John Ford's western *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, James Stewart's Ransom Stoddard becomes a great man on the strength of the popular misapprehension that he rid the town of the gunfighter, crook and bully Valance (in fact the fatal bullet was fired by a rancher who refused to take the credit). Auteurism works the same way: we valorise some prominent

figures, while other authors (for example, Willis Goldbeck and James Warner Bellah, who scripted that film) stay hidden in the shadows.

It would be foolish to claim that Walter Hill 'authored' *Deadwood*, the HBO western series written and created by David Milch that ran just three seasons, 2004-2006. But in directing the pilot episode Hill did set the tone for the look and feel of this, probably the most radical makeover the western has seen since the 1970s – the time when Hill started out writing scripts for Peckinpah and Huston. Hill – more than Milch, possibly – saw the resonance in casting Keith Carradine as Will Bill Hickock, the legendary marshal whose story Hill had told in *Wild Bill* (1995) ten years earlier (filming in the very same western 'town' used in *Deadwood*). Carradine had been in Hill's *The Long Riders* (1980), of course, but also Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971), which may be *Deadwood*'s closest forebear in its focus on prostitution and mining as the bedrock of the new American West. And Keith's father John takes us back to *Stagecoach* – back to John Ford.

Hill won an Emmy for his work on the *Deadwood* pilot and restored his reputation after several unsuccessful films. It probably allowed him to get *Broken Trail* (2006) made as a miniseries at AMC – it being unlikely any Hollywood studio would bankroll a three-hour epic about the bond between a trio of cowboys and the Chinese women they rescue from a sex trafficker. A lyrical and romantic work, albeit with tough asides about violence, exploitation and racism, *Broken Trail* allows the always laconic Hill the most expansive canvas he's had, and it brings out richer, finer emotional notes than we find in the majority of his theatrical features. **Tom Charity**

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Although his theatrical output has been subjected to numerous close readings, critics tend to ignore the 20 TV segments – 17 episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* as well as one-off contributions to *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, *Suspicion* and *Ford Starline* – Hitchcock directed between 1955 and 1962. What people generally recall are Hitchcock's humorous introductions to the two series that bore his name.

Yet, far from being frivolous diversions between more significant feature films, these short TV dramas frequently find Hitchcock at his most downbeat and politically radical. 'Breakdown' (1955), 'Four O'Clock' (1957) and 'Poison' (1958) focus on individuals whose masculinity draws them into situations where the active male body is reduced to a feminine state of paralysis; 'The Crystal Trench' (1959) – like



Rainer Werner Fassbinder One of the cinematic highlights of 2010, the restoration of the astonishing two-part 1973 sci-fi epic 'World on a Wire' revealed that some of his greatest work was yet to be fully discovered. *David Jenkins*



Alfred Hitchcock Far from being frivolous diversions, short TV dramas like 'Breakdown', made for 'Alfred Hitchcock Presents', frequently find the director at his most downbeat and politically radical. *Brad Stevens*



Krzysztof Kieslowski Polish filmmakers often turned to television in the 1970s and 80s, but no one made a splash as big as Kieslowski with 'Dekalog', his ten-part series inspired by the Ten Commandments. *Michael Brooke*



Michael Mann *'Miami Vice' was one of the signature shows of the 1980s, updating the buddy-cop formula for a neon-lit, electric-scored decade. Easy to caricature, it delivers a unique, flavourful mix of glitz and sleaze.* Kim Newman



Roberto Rossellini In *'The Taking of Power by Louis XIV'* Rossellini was ironically interrogating power and ideology, revealing it to be simply and only the enforced will of a few flawed, unexceptional men. Michael Atkinson



Lars von Trier Set in a modern Copenhagen hospital peopled by increasingly grotesque characters and beset by paranormal forces, the spoof-gothic series *'The Kingdom'* has gained a cult following. Ian Christie



Vertigo – exposes heterosexual romanticism to the most thoroughgoing critique imaginable (and even manages to sneak in some blatant homosexual references); *'Revenge'* (1955) defines rape as a crime of which all men are collectively guilty; and the Roald Dahl-scripted *'Lamb to the Slaughter'* (1958) sympathetically portrays a woman's scheme to murder her unfaithful husband. Many of these segments display a Bressonian rigour, the economy required by short schedules and tight budgets enabling Hitchcock to eliminate everything superfluous and create several models of classical *mise en scène*. If you think you know everything there is to know about Hitchcock's artistry, seek out these televisual gems – and prepare to be astonished. **Brad Stevens**

IMAMURA SHOHEI

During the early 1970s, Imamura directed several TV documentaries continuing his exploration into the Japanese psyche while interrogating 'official' versions of Japanese history, focusing on Japanese living a life of both voluntary and involuntary exile in Asia. In his three-part series *In Search of Unreturned Soldiers* (*Mikikanhei o otte*, 1971), Imamura tracks down former serving members of the Imperial Army implicated in atrocities committed by the Japanese during World War II. In the first film, shot in Malaysia, his subject has converted to Islam and renounced both violence and the country of his birth, while in the second, filmed in Thailand, Imamura stages a drunken session between the expats to elicit their conflicting thoughts regarding blind obedience to the emperor.

Two years later, Imamura invited the most fervently patriotic of these exiles back to Japan in *Private Fujita Comes Home* (*Muhomatsu kokyo ni kaeru*, 1973), where a gruelling encounter with Fujita's estranged brother and sister highlights the misguidedness of his unswerving loyalty to his homeland. Imamura also made *The Pirates of Bubuan* (*Bubuan no kaizoku*, 1972), about pirate factions controlling the seas around the Philippines, and *Karayuki-san: The Making of a Prostitute* (1975), focusing on an old woman living in Malaysia who had been lured by poverty into working in overseas brothels during Japan's period of militarist expansion during the Meiji Period – a subject Imamura would return to in fiction in his 1987 feature *Zegen*. **Jasper Sharp**

PETER JACKSON

Jackson's rise from low-budget exploitation to bloated Tolkien trilogies was almost entirely linear, aside from the delightfully impish diversion *Forgotten Silver* (1995), co-

directed by Costa Botes and originally commissioned by New Zealand television. It's a mockumentary about Colin McKenzie, a little-known and long-dead inventor whose personal effects included a number of film reels whose contents apparently anticipated most of the cinema's key innovations (the tracking shot, the close-up, colour, synchronised sound and the full-length feature) by several years, but passed unnoticed by the wider world thanks to his geographical remoteness. Extensive 'evidence' is proffered in the form of convincingly distressed-looking 'excerpts' from McKenzie's work in the manner of Woody Allen's *Zelig* (the clips from biblical epic *Salome* are especially delicious), while actor Sam Neill, critic Leonard Maltin, mogul Harvey Weinstein, respected New Zealand historian/archivist John O'Shea and Jackson himself keep admirably straight faces when discussing the imminent rewriting of film history. It's tempting to describe it as the Kiwi equivalent of the Hitler Diaries scandal, but the pranksters behind it 'fessed up as soon as they realised – to their genuine horror – that many patriotic TV viewers were taking it seriously. **Michael Brooke**

KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI

Polish filmmakers, even well-established ones like Andrzej Wajda, often turned to TV in the 1970s and 80s, although no one made a splash as big as Kieslowski with his ten-part series inspired by the moral conundrums posed by the Ten Commandments. *Dekalog* (1988) was exhibited theatrically, shown on BBC2 (itself a rare honour for a Polish production) and is still widely regarded as one of the decade's towering cinematic achievements. But Kieslowski had been directing for TV for 15 years, with *Pedestrian Subway* (1973), *Personnel* (1975), *The Calm* (1976) and *Short Working Day* (1981) paralleling documentaries and early cinema features.

Unlike *Dekalog*, none of these is first-rank Kieslowski, although *Personnel* (which drew on the director's own early experience as a theatrical stagehand) and *The Calm* (about a former jailbird reluctantly caught up in a dispute between his new boss and his colleagues) are stronger dramatic works than his first cinema feature *The Scar* (1976). Kieslowski disowned *Short Working Day*, believing that he'd made a fundamental mistake in creating a protagonist who was a Communist Party regional secretary, but it's now a fascinating snapshot of the 1976 industrial unrest that anticipated the rise of Solidarity four years later. **Michael Brooke**

JOSEPH H. LEWIS

Lewis's exemplary B-movie career (*Gun Crazy*, *The Big Combo*) came to an

end with *Terror in a Texas Town* (1958), but contrary to his IMDb bio, it didn't slow down. In fact, between 1958 and 1963 Lewis went into hyperdrive, directing 51 of the 168 episodes of *The Rifleman* – almost 22 hours of potent drama, action and suspense. The series began grittily and auspiciously with Sam Peckinpah writing and directing, but he lasted only six scattered episodes; it was Lewis, more than any other director, who found both the show's abiding heart – in the way it delineated the relationships of sharpshooting widower Lucas McCain (Chuck Connors) with his young son Mark (Johnny Crawford) and with North Fork's recovering alcoholic marshal Micah Torrence (Paul Fix) – and its darkness, his episodes frequently profiling men destroyed by their Civil War experience.

Outstanding episodes include 'Face of Yesterday', in which Lucas is shaken by the likelihood of having to shoot the lookalike son of the first man he killed in wartime, and the two-part episode 'The Wyoming Story', in which foot-and-mouth disease lays waste to North Fork's economy, requiring Lucas to take a deadly out-of-town assignment so long in duration that his son literally becomes a man from the expectation that he's died (their reunion at the end, with its unabashed male kissing, is as startling as it is moving). 'Flowers by the Door' stars Richard Anderson as a seemingly mild book salesman who rapes and kills women living alone, while 'Closer Than a Brother' documents Micah's fall off the wagon with real tragedy. Especially sadistic is 'The Vaqueros', featuring Martin Landau as a Mexican bandit who has Lucas bound in the desert and abducts Mark, with most of the episode focusing on our sun-blistered hero's torturous efforts to escape and find his way to the nearest town.

Lewis later made one or two episodes each for *Bonanza*, *The Detectives*, *A Man Called Shenandoah* and *The Big Valley*, and was reunited with Connors on *Branded*, but these were all topped by his two 1965 *Gunsmoke* episodes, one of which memorably teamed him with Dennis Hopper. **Tim Lucas**

IDA LUPINO

Best remembered as an actress, Lupino was one of the busiest of the few women directors working in Hollywood in the late studio era. Though a small cult values the tough, issue-led big-screen melodramas she directed in the 1950s (especially *The Hitch-Hiker*, 1953), the bulk of her work was in episodic TV. 'No. 5 Checked Out' (1956), which Lupino wrote and directed for *Screen Directors Playhouse*, is an extension of her film work: a suspense piece with deaf



Ida Lupino's 'Guillotine', made for the TV series *Thriller*

Teresa Wright menaced by Peter Lorre. Though she did comedy (*Bewitched*, *Gilligan's Island*), Lupino specialised in paranoid, gothic suspense, including episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Twilight Zone*.

Her most striking TV work may be nine episodes of the noirish horror show *Thriller*, presented by Boris Karloff, including the grim Cornell Woolrich adaptation 'Guillotine' and the witchcraft tale 'La Strega'. She also contributed multiple episodes to benchmark socially engaged shows like the western *Have Gun – Will Travel* and the ultimate encapsulation of what's-wrong-with-America in the form of a TV series: *The Fugitive*. Though she directed for female-skewing soaps (*Dr Kildare*) and the girly private-eye show *Honey West*, Lupino's episodic assignments were often almost stereotypically macho, including westerns (*The Virginian*, *Bonanza*) and the bullet-riddled true-crime tabloid *The Untouchables*. **Kim Newman**

DAVID LYNCH

Although Lynch seems the least likely American filmmaker to helm a network TV series, *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991) functioned entirely on its auteur's terms. Lynch's subsequent televisual experiments proved less successful – *On the Air* (1992) was cancelled after seven episodes, *Hotel Room* (1992) after three – and his TV career ended with *Mulholland Dr*, a rejected 1998 pilot he turned into a theatrical feature three years later by shooting new footage, creating a hybrid work in which the material for an episodic narrative is simultaneously assembled and destroyed.

Yet TV had more of a creative than a destructive impact on Lynch. If *Blue Velvet* (1986) and *Wild at Heart* (1990) achieved cult status by adopting a tone of postmodern superiority, the five theatrical films Lynch made between 1992 and 2006 display an unironic commitment to their protagonists. *Twin Peaks* was the turning point. Its pilot episode reproduces *Blue Velvet*'s contempt for displays of emotion (notably when we are asked

to laugh at Deputy Andy Brennan's bursting into tears upon seeing Laura Palmer's corpse), but this attitude gradually dissipates over the course of the following 29 episodes, and is conspicuous by its absence from the theatrical prequel *Twin Peaks Fire Walk With Me* (1992). Lynch clearly fell in love with his characters while creating a series which, despite being conceived as a mockery of soap-opera clichés, had the last laugh by inculcating its creator with values inherent in a storytelling tradition. **Brad Stevens**

MICHAEL MANN

As a writer, Mann contributed scripts to 1970s cop shows (*Bronk*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Police Story*); his first fiction directing was 'The Buttercup Killer', a 1977 episode of *Police Woman*. And in fact it's arguable that, for all Mann's subsequent cinematic celebrity, he has been even more influential in TV than in movies. *The Jericho Mile* (1979), an outstanding TV movie about a convict who takes up long-distance running, was released theatrically in the UK, and picked up a critical tailwind that helped launch Mann's feature career. Later, his 1989 TV movie *L.A. Takedown* was a literal first draft for his better-known movie *Heat* (1995).

In the interim, Mann created, produced and wrote TV series: *Vegas* (1978-81), *Miami Vice* (1984-90) and *Crime Story* (1986-88, for which he directed one episode). Pitched as 'MTV cops', *Miami Vice* – which Mann would also revisit as a cinema product – was one of the signature shows of the 1980s, updating the *Starsky and Hutch* buddy-cop formula for a neon-lit, electric-scored, cocaine-fuelled decade. Easy to caricature, *Miami Vice* also delivers a unique, flavourful mix of glitz and sleaze which holds up even as mullets and rolled-up sleeves have become laughably retro. The 60s-set *Crime Story*, a based-on-fact saga built around recurrent Mann star Dennis Farina, is also notable.

Kim Newman

OSHIMA NAGISA

Oshima made twenty films for television, the last two as commissions



Sam Peckinpah's 'Noon Wine', made for ABC Stage 67

from Britain (*Kyoto, My Mother's Place* for BBC Scotland in 1991 and *A Century of Japanese Cinema* for BFI/Channel 4 in 1995). All of them can be classed as documentaries, but none of them offers straight reportage and many are as idiosyncratic as his fiction features. The earnest and rather stern aspect of Oshima's personality figures more often than his toothy grin, but his playful side is never too far away.

Freelance after walking out of his contract with Shochiku in 1961, Oshima turned to television the following year because feature-directing offers were thin on the ground in the declining Japanese film industry – and because his rep as an intransigent maverick daunted the corporate suits. Most of his TV work has been long unavailable, but the few examples seen in retrospectives show that he stayed close to all his core concerns: young people pushed towards nihilism, the plight of Koreans in Japan and official incompetence/corruption are all present and correct, and Oshima's despair at the state of the Japanese Left is channelled into the masterly *Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution* (1969), which juxtaposes Chinese newsreels with Oshima's sceptical questions. **Tony Rayns**

SAM PECKINPAH

The line on Peckinpah is that his vision of the West darkened considerably between the 1962 release of *Ride the High Country* and the arrival of *The Wild Bunch* in 1969. The first act of Peckinpah's career was spent in TV, however, and a parsing of his work shows a worldview that was pretty jaundiced from the get-go.

Peckinpah's crowning achievement in TV was his creation of the short-lived 1960 series *The Westerner*, a new benchmark in realism for the TV western, but he'd cut his teeth writing episodes of *The Rifleman*, *Broken Arrow* and *Gunsmoke*, along the way putting together the beginnings of what would become his stock company of players. From the start, the 'Peckinpah West' is evident in his writing.



His season 1 *Gunsmoke* episode 'The Guitar' (1956) takes place in a vacuum of authority – Marshal Dillon leaves Dodge City as a weedy troubadour (played by none other than Aaron Spelling) rolls in on the back of a burro. The troubadour is bullied by two rowdies, to the disgust of the citizenry. The rowdies accost the troubadour on his way out of town – but the next day it's the two rowdies that Dillon finds swinging from a tree. The entire town of Dodge City has been culpable in vigilante murder... and it goes unpunished.

Peckinpah's transition to feature-film director was far from smooth, and in the downtime after the debacle of 1965's *Major Dundee*, he returned to TV, producing the nearest thing in his oeuvre to an unknown masterpiece, a 1966 adaptation of Katherine Anne Porter's novella *Noon Wine* for *ABC Stage 67* which remains bracingly bleak viewing, ending with the echo of a shotgun suicide. Were he never to have made a feature film, Peckinpah would have been a significant figure in American TV for this alone. **Nick Pinkerton**

MAURICE PIALAT

While Pialat is credited as writer on all of his feature films, he was working from a script by René Wheeler in making the TV serial *La Maison des bois* (1971). This is not to say that *La Maison* is any the less felt – indeed, its seven episodes and six hours rank among Pialat's highest accomplishments.

Wheeler's script concerns three city kids sheltering with a groundkeeper's family in the country, to escape the dangers of World War I. Pialat was presumably attached to the project because he had shown such tender insight into child psychology in his 1968 feature debut *L'Enfance nue* – and in fact two of that film's stars, Michel Terrazon and Michel Puff, also appear here. Far from the front lines, *La Maison* is a catalogue of the domestic and social rituals of the bygone pre-1914 world, as enacted by the inhabitants of an isolated village whose sylvan peace is ruffled by the first wind of modernity's coming storm. (The death of the local marquise in a car accident is a major event of the first episode.)

The miniseries was Pialat's first period work, and in his approach to filming the past, he is not so far from that of Rossellini in his contemporary histories, like *The Taking of Power by Louis XIV*. What both men do is put across something of the soul of an era through the pure accumulation of detail, in terms of both behaviour – the brusque, gruff affection of the peasant class – and living spaces. This is not ostentatious art-department fetishisation, though, where each interior is a showroom; the quotidian

objects simply, naturally *are*. In his 1991 feature *Van Gogh*, Pialat applied the same strategy, though he would never again work with such a large canvas as he used on the small screen. **Nick Pinkerton**

MICHAEL POWELL

Powell's first idea about how TV could become a 'friend', when most filmmakers still feared it, was a slate of 111 ideas for dance and drama features, *Powell's Tales*, to include such varied figures as Orson Welles, Igor Stravinsky, Graham Sutherland and Jean-Paul Belmondo, pitched prematurely (and unsuccessfully) to CBS in 1952.

A decade later, he cut his teeth on directing series drama, with three 50-minute episodes for Herb Brodtkin's *Espionage* series (1963-64). 'The Frantick Rebel' featured Roger Livesey as Dr Johnson foiling a plot to aid the American revolutionaries. In 'Never Turn Your Back on a Friend', British, Russian and American commandos argue over the fate of a captured Nazi atomic scientist. And former spymaster Leo Marks wrote 'A Free Agent' with some of the sardonic humour of his *Peeping Tom* script, as a British and a Russian spy cause consternation by getting married.

Next, the American singer Norman Foster invited Powell to direct him in Bartok's opera *Bluebeard's Castle*, economically but superbly filmed in Salzburg for German television in 1964. More US series drama followed, and later a proposed series of artists' profiles entitled *13 Ways to Kill a Poet*, which failed to gain backing. But in 1978, with Powell's rediscovery gathering momentum, the BBC enabled him to revisit the remote Shetland setting of his first major film in *Return to Edge of the World*. **Ian Christie**

ERIC ROHMER

Among the relatively few works Rohmer made for TV, a series of mostly 20-minute 'educational' documentaries he was commissioned to write and direct in the 1960s stands out as formally innovative and just as personal and idiosyncratic as his work for the cinema. That the former teacher believed there was no significant difference between the two forms is evident both in his choice of subjects – the celebration of old French in *Perceval ou le conte de Graal* (1964) anticipates his dramatised adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes's romance by more than a decade, while tributes to Louis Lumière, René Clair, Jean Rouch and Jean-Luc Godard testify to his abiding interest in ways of representing reality on film – and in the importance he attached to composition and the relationship of image to sound.

Mixing evocative camerawork by Pierre Lhomme with Rohmer's musings on how industrialisation transformed the French landscape, *Les Métamorphoses du paysage* (1964) is psychogeography decades before the term was coined. *Don Quichotte de Cervantes* (1965) ranges through various visual representations of the knight almost as if he'd actually existed, while *Edgar Poe: Histoires extraordinaires* (1965) examines the writer's philosophy while including, by way of illustration, clips from films by Epstein, Astruc, Godard and – rarest and best of all – Rohmer's own 1954 short *Bérénice*, in which the protagonist is played by the thirtysomething director himself. **Geoff Andrew**

ROBERTO ROSSELLINI

Respected worldwide since the war for his pioneering neorealism and ethical visual choices, Rossellini held a press conference in 1962 and announced

that cinema was dead, and that he'd no longer be making "films". Having been through a variety of public mills already, Rossellini decided to spend the remainder of his career cinematizing the entirety of human history as a series of inexpensive but ambitious TV films. It's a project that comes off, then and now, as the cranky, quixotic, righteous stuff of modern-art legend. For the next 13 years he sought out production money all over the globe to fulfil his vision: fuelled by pedagogic ire, the filmmaker's perspective grew sterner and more inhospitable the more he saw post-war culture slide into amnesiac self-indulgence.

The films that resulted – starting with *The Taking of Power by Louis XIV* (*La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV*, 1966) and proceeding through eight more projects, taking up ten of the last 12 years of his life – are mundane in form and radically focused on the facts. The *mise en scène* couldn't be more functional, the locations less authentic, the acting less dramatic. It's a dogged strategy: Rossellini was ironically interrogating power and ideology, revealing it to be simply and only the enforced will of a few flawed, unexceptional men. In typically acidic Rossellinian fashion, history is reduced to an unblinking litany of rituals, meetings, speeches and grisly hygiene. If TV was an indulgent wasteland, this was its cleansing purge, a cataract of almost punitive experiences that set the records straight. **Michael Atkinson**

KEN RUSSELL

Russell never underestimated his vast body of TV work, telling biographer John Baxter, "If I could feel that films I did for television were shown all over the world at frequent intervals, I'd probably never make a so-called feature film again." After some dazzling short items for the BBC's *Monitor*, Russell spread his wings with the 55-minute 'Elgar' (1962), made for the arts strand's rooth edition. Before his breakthrough third feature *Women in Love* (1969), he made increasingly ambitious arts films for the BBC – including his own favourite, the Delius biopic *Song of Summer* (1968) – although he later split acrimoniously with the corporation after the scandal over his notorious Richard Strauss *Omnibus* 'Dance of the Seven Veils' (1970).

When feature-film funding dried up later in his career, he returned to TV, making several highly personal and idiosyncratic editions of *The South Bank Show* for his old friend Melvyn Bragg and returning to both D.H. Lawrence and the BBC with the four-part *Lady Chatterley* (1993), two years after his final cinema feature. He remained a TV regular on both sides of the camera, including a memorable 2007 appearance on *Celebrity Big Brother*. **Michael Brooke**



Orson Welles *From television's earliest days, he had a conception of it as a conversational medium, ideal for storytelling and sleight of hand. This yielded UK productions like 'Around the World with Orson Welles'.* Ben Walters

MARTIN SCORSESE

Although in the 1980s Scorsese made commercials for Armani and pop videos for Michael Jackson and Robbie Robertson, his first real TV work came after the low-budget *After Hours* (1985), when he employed its writer Joseph Minion on his episode of the Spielberg-produced series *Amazing Stories*, 'Mirror Mirror' (1985). But aside from quoting a clip from a beloved Hammer movie, there was little that was personal about the project.

Documentary provided the real lure to the small screen – he presented his own *A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies* (1995), followed by a (still-to-be-completed) exploration of Italian cinema. On the series *The Blues* (2003), he filled in for Spike Lee to cover the African inheritance, but he was clearly more on home turf with his retrospective look at Bob Dylan's career in the 1960s, *No Direction Home* (2005), a brilliant assemblage of archive and interviews relating to a creative genius the director clearly reveres.

Scorsese has also made the leap into the generously budgeted world of TV serial drama. His 2010 pilot episode of *Boardwalk Empire*, dealing with the heyday of Atlantic City, had more swooping camera moves than were available to subsequent directors. His name now appears regularly on documentary profiles (George Harrison, Fran Lebowitz, Elia Kazan), and there's even talk of expanding his feature *Gangs of New York* into a TV series. **David Thompson**

NARCISO IBÁÑEZ SERRADOR

Born in Uruguay, Serrador is best known internationally for the two cult Spanish horror features he directed – *La Residencia* (1969) and *Who Can Kill a Child?* (*¿Quién puede matar a un niño?*, 1976) – in which children turn the tables on adults for all the wrongs they have inflicted on them throughout history. But despite those two big-screen triumphs, his most influential and durable work was made for Spanish TV, building his hugely prolific career with programmes on topics as diverse as animal rights and human sexuality, as well as one of the most successful game shows in the history of this medium, *Un, dos, tres* (1972–2004). But he is best (and most affectionately) known as Chicho, the King of Horror, mainly thanks to the series *Historias para no dormir* (*Tales to Keep You Awake*).

Introducing each of the episodes à la Alfred Hitchcock, Serrador framed the series as a sort of Spanish-flavoured *Tales from the Crypt*, its nonconformist politics couched in irreverent, genuinely unsettling black humour and given voice by monsters and bogeymen. The series ran from 1966 to 1982, covering the last years of Franco's dictatorship and



Ken Russell's 'Elgar', for the BBC's *Monitor*

Spain's transition to democracy, and had a massive influence on the next generation of Spanish filmmakers – figures such as Jaime Balagueró, Alex de la Iglesia, Paco Plaza and Mateo Gil. Thus it proved instrumental in shaping the current resurgence of Spanish horror and putting it on the international map. **Mar Diestro-Dópido**

STEVEN SODERBERGH

Feigned insouciance is a trait common to all of Soderbergh's cinema works – the underlying sense that even though his films may appear loose and playful, there's actually a hard-bitten rigour at play. At time of writing, Soderbergh is apparently making good on his promise to quit the movie industry with a view to concentrating on painting and TV directing. On the evidence of his small-screen-directing gigs to date, this could be a reason to be cheerful. During the period of creative afterburn following his 1989 breakthrough *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, he directed two episodes of lavish US noir serial *Fallen Angels* (1993–95). One episode, 'The Professional Man', based on a David Goodis short story, offers a brilliant inversion of classical genre conventions – another trait that lends Soderbergh's apparently eclectic cinematic oeuvre some thematic union. Brendan Fraser plays a control-freak elevator operator who moonlights as a white-gloved assassin. He's assigned the task of killing a man he knows, and his ice-cool facade cracks. (Plus, all the characters happen to be gay.)

But it's Soderbergh's 2003 HBO series *K Street* which remains his bona-fide small-screen triumph, a byzantine, DV-shot saga of political lobbyists, each episode of which was written and filmed and in the days preceding its airing. Some might argue that *K Street* is in fact Soderbergh's crowning achievement as a director of fiction, not least because it's been spoken of – entirely reasonably – alongside Jacques Rivette's 1971 masterpiece *Out 1*, another tale charting a group of people as they slowly drift apart, from another director known for his ability to give the illusion that he doesn't really care. **David Jenkins**



Martin Scorsese's *Boardwalk Empire*

STEVEN SPIELBERG

It is not often remembered that Spielberg got his start directing TV when he was a very young man. This may be because his breakout film *Duel* (1971), while made for TV, was given a theatrical release. His ambitions were always moving towards feature films, but Spielberg cut his teeth and served a useful apprenticeship in a world of late-60s/early-70s TV episodes and TV movies. Because he had no choice yet over his material, Spielberg did the expected episodes of *Columbo* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.* but he also was obliged to cater to the flamboyant neediness and command of late-period Joan Crawford in a *Night Gallery* episode called 'Eyes'. More interesting still, Spielberg built a whole TV movie around the watchful, neurotic Sandy Dennis: *Something Evil* (1972), a rarely screened but highly suggestive thriller that brings out his most complicated feelings about mothers and motherhood for the first time.

Spielberg has continued to produce for TV, but his talent and his urge have always been for the biggest screen and the most elaborately planned and elegantly achieved cinematic *mise en scène* and spatial relationships. He has had little time in his success and his maturity for women as complicated as Crawford and Dennis. **Dan Callahan**

WHIT STILLMAN

'Whit Stillman's *Homicide: Life on the Street*' sounds like an improv-comedy assignment, but no: Stillman, portraitist of the "Urban Haute Bourgeoisie" directed an episode of season 5 of the gritty procedural in the autumn of 1996, halfway through the four-year gap between his features *Barcelona* (1994) and *The Last Days of Disco* (1998). 'The Heart of Saturday Night', the last episode to be written by series mainstay Henry Bromell, is distinctive for its focus on the bereaved, and for its unusual structure. The ordinary business of Baltimore's murder police, filmed in *Homicide*'s characteristic handheld style, is interspersed with what at first seem to be interviews with the victims' loved ones – eventually revealed to be taking place

in a bereavement counselling group. One is played by guest star Rosanna Arquette; another, UHB-y tax lawyer Jude Silvio, by Chris Eigeman, who had starred in both *Barcelona* and Stillman's 1990 debut *Metropolitan*.

Impatient with the detectives, unco-operative with the others in the group, Silvio is the least sympathetic character in the episode, apparently as the result of a last-minute rewrite. Stillman has since complained that Silvio became "this awful, caricatured yuppie villain", and that he himself was "blacklisted" from TV for objecting to the change. **Henry K. Miller**

STUDIO GHIBLI

Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao, the twin talents of Japan's best-loved animation house, both got their breaks in TV. They met while employed at Toei Animation, with Takahata directing several episodes of the series *Ken the Wolf Boy* (*Okami shonen Ken*, 1963–65), on which Miyazaki served as an in-between animator. Later in the decade Takahata made his theatrical debut for Toei with *Little Norse Prince* (*Taiyo no oji Horusu no daiboken*, 1968), with Miyazaki working as key animator and scene designer.

The two subsequently co-directed episodes of the first series of *Lupin III* (*Rupan Sansei*) before hitting their stride in the 1970s, bringing to the small screen classics of children's literature such as Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (*Arupusu no shōjo Hajji*, 1974, 52 episodes) and *Anne of Green Gables* (*Akage no An*, 1979, 50 episodes), with Takahata directing and Miyazaki working on scene designs and layouts. Meanwhile, Miyazaki made his debut as a solo director in 1978 with the series *Future Boy Conan* (*Mirai Shonen Conan*), before going on to direct *Sherlock Hound* (*Meitantei Hōmuzu*), whose 26 episodes aired in 1984–85. Takahata's theatrical feature *Chie the Brat* (*Jarinko Chie*, 1981), based on a manga about "the most unfortunate girl in Japan" led to him overseeing the 64-episode TV spin-off.

With the formation of Studio Ghibli following the success of Miyazaki's first feature *Nausicaä of the Valley of Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*,



1984), both left TV to concentrate on the theatrical market. Nevertheless, the hallmarks of the in-house style developed throughout Takahata and Miyazaki's sizeable body of early work are much in evidence in Mochizuki Tomomi's made-for-TV Studio Ghibli feature *Ocean Waves* (*Umi ga kikoeru*, 1993), a portrait of a high-school love triangle. **Jasper Sharp**

QUENTIN TARANTINO

Tarantino directed an episode of *ER* in 1995 entitled 'Motherhood'. The events of the episode are framed against the birth of a child, and in one extremely moving moment Kathleen Wilhoite clutches her newborn and observes in horror as the blood-splashed chaos of the emergency room swells around her. Is this what her daughter has to look forward to? It's a moment that echoes the sedate, climactic sequences of *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (2004), Tarantino's grandiose cartoon revenge saga which eventually reveals itself as deep expression of maternal anxiety.

Tarantino's TV work has been a strictly big-ticket affair, with the director sub-letting his eponymous brand as a ratings booster. The formulaic nature of TV drama means that his *ER* episode sticks rigidly to the series template, even though he does appropriate the hectic machinations of a hospital environment as an excuse to channel classic screwball comedy. Tarantino's proclivity for plundering his vast record collection is in evidence as a Bob Neuwith track plays over the opening shots of his 2005 double episode of *CSI: Las Vegas* – entitled 'Grave Danger' – which again draws on *Kill Bill: Vol. 2*, with the entire plot riffing on the scene in which Daryl Hannah's Elle Driver buries Thurman's Bride alive. Though narratively it's fairly standard *CSI*, Tarantino's paw prints are always highly visible, initially in a comic digression in which two characters discuss the rules of the *Dukes of Hazzard* boardgame, and later when a monochrome splatter dream sequence is ushered in to take us across the finish line. **David Jenkins**

JACQUES TATI

Tati's final work, *Parade* was made to settle a debt of gratitude. While shooting *Trafic* (1971) in the Netherlands, Tati ran out of money. The DP quit. But a Swedish TV crew had turned up to shoot a documentary about the making of *Trafic*, would they, Tati inquired, consider helping him out? The documentary never got made, but thanks to the Swedes *Trafic* was completed, and at the Swedish premiere Sveriges Radio TV suggested a quid pro quo. The initial idea was a series of 13 short comedy programmes, but what finally emerged was a single 85-minute film set in a circus.

Parade has no plot, not even the scant storylines of Tati's previous films. It presents a sequence of variety acts performed before an audience, most involving either Tati himself or a bunch of clown-acrobats, with the audience very much a part of the show. In its TV-scaled minimalism *Parade* is perhaps Tati's most personal film. The acts he performs are the *impressions sportifs* that first earned him fame in the 1930s Paris music halls, and there's a hint of desperation about them.

"Look," Tati seems to be saying, "this is all I've got left – will it do?" Even if we didn't know *Parade* was his swansong, it would be easy to guess. **Philip Kemp**

JACQUES TOURNEUR

In his fine book *Jacques Tourneur: The Cinema of Nightfall*, Chris Fujiwara laments that, aside from his work on *Bonanza* and *The Twilight Zone* (one episode each), the bulk of Tourneur's work in TV (1954-65) is generally unavailable for viewing outside private archives. Fujiwara was able to screen enough to fill 14 pages of his 1998 book, deeming most of these TV assignments "mediocre exercises in plodding hackwork", yet he singles out the *General Electric Theater*'s 'The Martyr' (1955) and 'The Aftermath' (1960) and *The Walter Winchell File*'s 'The Stopover' (1958) as "small masterpieces in which Tourneur's visual authority is not only clearly in evidence but more apparent than in some of his theatrical features from the period".

Of the four Tourneur episodes included on the DVD *The Barbara Stanwyck Show, Volume 1*, one – 'Ironbark's Bride' (1960) – is essential to any collection of the director's work. It casts Stanwyck as an 1880s widow and mail-order bride who arrives, with a sullen 16-year-old son, to keep house for a crusty old rancher (Charles Bickford) with 400 acres, only to be surprised by the sudden appearance of her late husband (Gerald Mohr), who isn't the good man she raised her son to emulate but rather a dastardly outlaw with an eye now set on inheriting her new husband's spread. Making beautiful use of setting and paying typically acute attention to character, Tourneur manages to compress the dramatic wealth of his best western features into a more compact setting.

Before Tourneur worked with writer Richard Matheson on the director's penultimate

Jacques Tati's *Parade*

film *The Comedy of Terrors* (1964), the pair also collaborated on 'Night Call' (1964), the finest episode of *The Twilight Zone*'s final season and a tour de force for Gladys Cooper, who plays an elderly woman receiving anonymous wee-hours calls from her late husband. Its delicately traced chills rank with the most exquisite of Tourneur's long-form 1940s achievements such as *Cat People*. **Tim Lucas**

AGNÈS VARDA

In 2012, a very special DVD box-set was released in France. Entitled *Tout(e) Varda*, it compiles everything the director has made in her long career – features, shorts, a wealth of inimitable *boni*, and two fascinating films made for French TV.

The most recent of these was made for the Franco-German cultural channel Arte, which had co-produced Varda's ciné-memoire *The Beaches of Agnès* (*Les Plages d'Agnès*, 2008) on the condition that she made something for the channel. The result was *Agnès de ci de là Varda* (2011), a series of five episodes of 45 minutes each, with Varda fronting in her much-loved persona of a globe-trotting, DV-camera-toting, psychedelic granny. Best known outside France for the sequences shot in Chris Marker's studio, the series chronicles Varda's travels between 2008 and 2011, and includes numerous astute mini-essays on art.

The other work is a real rarity. *Nausicaa* (1970) was made for French state TV in response to the 1967 generals' coup d'état in Greece (Varda's father was Greek). Part political pamphlet-film, part romantic drama, interspersed with sketches, the film has an intriguing backstory. The 16mm working copy mysteriously vanished from Varda's editing suite, never to be returned. It transpired that nothing critical of the regime was to be permitted on French TV because France was selling Mirage fighters to the Greek junta. It was thanks to Jacques Ledoux of the Belgian Cinémathèque, who salvaged the

only other existing copy, that this piece of suppressed TV history is once again available to watch. **Chris Darke**

LARS VON TRIER

Between his attention-grabbing international debut with *The Element of Crime* (1984) and the success of *Europa* (1991), von Trier shot an extraordinary version of Euripides's *Medea* for Danish television in 1988. Based on a script by Carl Dreyer, this transposes Medea's abandonment by her husband Jason and harrowing

revenge to a bleak Norse setting in what remains one of the director's finest works, little-seen until a recent DVD release. By contrast, von Trier's spoof-gothic series *The Kingdom* (*Riget*, 1994-97) has gained a cult following. Set in a modern Copenhagen hospital peopled by increasingly grotesque characters and beset by paranormal forces apparently stemming from an ancient haunted cemetery that lies beneath it, it was remade in the US as *Kingdom Hospital* (2004).

Von Trier's interest in more experimental TV form began with a semi-fictionalised talk-show series, *The Teacher's Room* (1994), followed by six 24-hour interviews condensed into *Marathon* (1996), and continuing with *D-dag*, when four Danish channels showed four different versions of a bank-heist scenario (one directed by von Trier) simultaneously on New Year's Eve 1999, which viewers were invited to 'cut' between using their remote controls. A composite 'finished film' version appeared in 2001, to little acclaim. **Ian Christie**

ORSON WELLES

Think of TV and Welles and you think of cheesy ads for cheap wine or frozen food, or magic tricks on talkshows. The real story is more bittersweet: for Welles, TV was the one that got away. Before he fell to earth after *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942), the boy wonder had gobbled up theatre, radio and cinema with brilliant gusto. His genius was his apprehension of a medium's unique properties: what made a play electric was different from what worked on the air or the big screen. From TV's earliest days he had a conception of it as a conversational medium, ideal for storytelling and sleight of hand. This yielded UK productions like *Orson Welles' Sketch Book* and *Around the World with Orson Welles* (both 1955), and the brilliant pilot he made for US TV called *The Fountain of Youth* (1956), which blended storytelling, back projection and lip-synching to intoxicating effect.

But instead of institutional largesse, Welles now found networks committed to formulaic genre output. He kept trying – a picaresque portrait of Gina Lollobrigida here, a Spanish travelogue with his family there – but it never took.

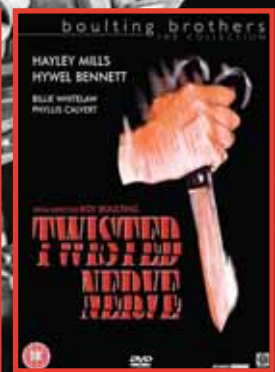
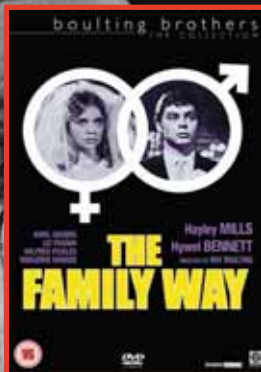
The 1968 Karen Blixen adaptation *The Immortal Story* (*Histoire immortelle*) was funded and broadcast by France's RTF; formally it falls more in line with Welles's idea of cinema than TV, but it's interesting for its experiments with eroticism and (at the broadcaster's insistence) colour. The secret triumph of Welles's televisual language of conspiratorial cajolery, however, is *F for Fake* (1973) – a project conceived for TV but released on the big screen. **Ben Walters** 



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THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER WHITE

Climaxing this month with the US broadcast of its final block of eight episodes, 'Breaking Bad' has become one of the most discussed and revered shows on television since its first season aired in 2008. A rich mix of film noir, sitcom and western traditions, it is above all a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions, centred on the unlikely figure of a 50-year-old chemistry teacher in suburban New Mexico

By John Wrathall

Breaking Bad took a long time to break big in the UK. The first season aired on the US cable channel AMC in January 2008, before being broadcast in the UK later that year on Sky's FX channel. UK freeview channel 5USA showed season 2 in 2011, but never picked up subsequent seasons, which only gradually trickled out on DVD over here (season 3 took two years to reach these shores after its US transmission in 2010). As word of mouth spread, *Breaking Bad* started to gain a reputation as a 'writer's show', namechecked in TV pitch meetings. But it was only with the UK launch of Netflix in 2012 that it really found a substantial British audience. By now there were four-and-a-half seasons available, and if you were really focused you could watch all 54 of the episodes so far during your month's free Netflix trial. Earlier this year *Breaking Bad* achieved a unique twin peak of critical and popular recognition: an adulatory essay in the *London Review of Books* and a pastiche on *The Simpsons*. With the final eight episodes due to be broadcast in the US from 11 August, addicts are counting down the days.

So what is it about *Breaking Bad* that has proved so potent? When James Gandolfini died in June, Bryan Cranston – who plays *BB*'s protagonist Walter White – tweeted: "I owe him. Quite simply, without Tony Soprano there is no Walter White." Both shows focus on a middle-aged man balancing family issues and midlife crisis with the running of a major criminal enterprise. Both juxtapose violent acts with everyday domestic concerns, to variously comic or shocking effect. The difference is that whereas *The Sopranos* showed us the ordinariness at the heart of an evil man, *BB* shows us something potentially far more challenging: the evil at the heart of an ordinary man.

At the start of episode 1, Walter White is not yet a criminal: he's a down-trodden high-school chemistry teacher who has just turned 50 and is about to discover he has cancer. If that isn't enough to make us feel sorry for him, his teenage son has cerebral palsy, his wife is pregnant with an unplanned baby, he's patronised by his asshole cop brother-in-law and – we will learn – while he once had a stake in a technology start-up, he sold out years ago for \$5000; his former partner is now a billionaire, while Walt has to do a second job at a car wash to make ends meet.

It might seem that writer/creator Vince Gilligan is stacking the sympathy odds in Walt's favour. But it's necessary, because over the ensuing 53 episodes (and, no doubt, the eight still to come), we follow this decent, intelligent family man's utter – and entirely self-willed – corruption, one tiny, incremental step at a time, as his

initial dallings in cooking crystal meth eventually put him at the centre of a murderous drugs empire. Little by little, Mr White goes dark, until – in *Macbeth*'s words – he is "in blood/Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er."

It's not idle to quote *Macbeth*, because *BB* is indeed a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions, spread out not over five acts but over 62 (or arguably, since each episode could be said to have three acts, over 186). The definition of tragedy in Christopher Booker's 2004 compendium of story structure, *The Seven Basic Plots*, could have been written with *BB* in mind: "A hero [is] tempted or impelled into a course of action which is in some way dark or forbidden. For a time... the hero... enjoys almost unbelievable, dreamlike success. But somehow it is in the nature of the course he is pursuing that he cannot achieve satisfaction. His mood is increasingly chequered by a sense of frustration. As he still pursues his dream, vainly trying to make his position secure, he begins to feel more and more threatened – things have got out of control. The original dream has soured into a nightmare where everything is going more and more wrong. This eventually culminates in the hero's violent destruction." Well, on that last point, the jury is still out. We will have to wait until the final episode airs in the US on 29 September.

BB's status as a 186-act tragedy is, however, something that Sony Pictures Television has been at some pains to conceal – and the mixed message of its marketing is perhaps one reason for the show's slow uptake over here. The DVD packaging, for instance, initially cried comedy. *The Complete First Season* shows the climactic image from episode 1: Walt, in glasses, green shirt and Y-fronts, standing in the desert with a gun in his hand, as smoke gushes from his RV. The show does undoubtedly have its grimly comic moments, thanks not least to Walt's exasperated mentorship of his former-student-turned-partner-in-crime Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul). But then so does *Macbeth*.

In the wake of *BB* and its back-to-back Primetime Emmy awards for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series (2008, 2009, 2010) Bryan Cranston has recently emerged as a character actor in prestigious Hollywood thrillers (*Drive*, *Argo*). But before *BB*, he was best known for playing the hapless father in the long-running family sitcom *Malcolm in the Middle* (2000-06). *Seinfeld* fans may also (just) recognise Cranston from his occasional role as Tim Whatley, a smooth Wasp dentist who riles Jerry by converting to Judaism. So *BB* doesn't just succeed in discovering the murderous self-interest at the heart of





suburban man; it discovers it in the shape of a man with the initial menace factor of, say, an American Richard Briers. (Though the enigma at the heart of Cranston is hinted at momentarily in *Seinfeld*, when Jerry wonders apropos Tim's alleged sexual peccadilloes: "Is this guy a dentist or Caligula?")

In one way, however, *BB* is the dark underside of a show like *Malcolm in the Middle*. As demonstrated by the 2011 documentary series *America in Primetime* (recently screened on the BBC as *The United States of Television*), *BB* – like *The Sopranos* – fits into a venerable tradition of US TV shows focusing on an everyman father struggling to hold it all together. This is largely a comic tradition, going back to shows such as *Father Knows Best* (1954-60) and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-66), and in *BB* there is undoubtedly an element of recognition and wish-fulfilment for care-worn dads as they watch the worm turn. In episode 1, Walt – with nothing to lose now he has been diagnosed with cancer – stands up to the bullies who have been mocking his son's slurred speech in a clothes shop. We root for him as he gets one over on the system by settling the medical bills his insurance refuses to cover with the proceeds of his increasingly lucrative drugs business. But all this is cleverly sucking

us into identifying with Walt until the point somewhere between seasons 1 and 5 (and it will come in different places for different viewers, providing a kind of morality litmus test) when we realise that his actions are no longer enterprising, chemistry-teacher-like solutions to cash-flow problems but in fact heinous crimes in which he takes not just pride but a kind of fascistic glee. As Walt himself puts it to his wife Skyler (Anna Gunn) in a much-YouTubed speech in season 4, episode 6: "I am not in danger, Skyler. I am the danger."

THINKING AHEAD

Episode 2 of season 1 of *Breaking Bad* is entitled 'Cat's in the Bag...', followed immediately by episode 3, '...And the Bag's in the River'. Connoisseurs of film noir will spot this as a quotation from Alexander Mackendrick's 1957 classic *Sweet Smell of Success* (I told you this was a writer's show). Of course, in terms of its influence on current American TV, *Sweet Smell of Success* really belongs in an article about *Mad Men*. But there is also a useful connection to be made in terms of *BB*.

Part of the satisfaction of Mackendrick's film lies in seeing clever, devious people who are always thinking one step ahead. This was an article of

PARTNERS IN CRIME
In *Breaking Bad*, Albuquerque chemistry teacher Walter White (Bryan Cranston, right) turns to the crystal-meth trade with his former high-school pupil Jesse Pinkman (Aaron Paul, left)

faith for the director who, in his invaluable tome *On Film-making*, memorably wrote: “A character who is dramatically interesting is intelligent enough to think ahead. He or she has not only thought out present intentions, but has foreseen reactions and possible obstacles. Intelligent characters anticipate and have counter-moves prepared.”

Once again, these words could almost have been written with *BB* in mind. As well as being a tragic hero, a sitcom-style beleaguered dad and a figure of midlife-crisis wish-fulfilment, Walt is also very much in the British tradition of the crafty middle-class murderer. Like Dr Crippen, he is skilled in what he calls “chemical disin-corporation”, using acid to dissolve bodies in the bath. (Unlike Jesse, Walt also knows that the bath needs to be made of plastic, otherwise it will dissolve too, with very messy results: see ‘Cat’s in the Bag’.)

The ability to plan ahead is in fact Walt’s defining characteristic. In this respect, ‘...And the Bag’s in the River’ is a key episode (and, for viewers coming to the series for the first time, the one where they will know for sure whether this show is for them). The episode revolves around Walt’s decision about whether to kill a Latino drug dealer (who has previously tried to kill him). At one point, as he agonises, Walt writes a list to weigh up his options. One column reads, “Let him live”; the other, “Kill him”. Under “Let him live” he lists: “It’s the moral thing to do”; “Judeo/Christian principles”; “You are not a murderer”; “He may listen to reason”; “Post-traumatic stress”; “Won’t be able to live with yourself”; “Murder is wrong”. In the second column there’s just one entry: “He’ll kill your entire family if you let him go.” It’s utterly deadpan, utterly black – but also a peerless insight into Walt’s character and thought processes.

In its focus on an everyman sucked into a world of violence and treachery, *BB* undoubtedly qualifies as noir. Though it has employed the services of many different writers and directors (among the latter a few recognisable noir journeymen such as John Dahl, Rian Johnson and Tim Hunter), the show is above all the work of creator and showrunner Vince Gilligan, writer of over a dozen key episodes, from the pilot to the forthcoming series finale, and director of half-a-dozen. There’s little in Gilligan’s previous filmography to hint at his mastery of noir. Initially working in movies, he had writing credits on the 1990s comedies *Wilder Napalm* (1993) and *Home Fries* (1998), and more recently on the Will Smith superhero vehicle *Hancock* (2008). In television, he cut his teeth on 30 episodes of *The X Files* (1993-2002) and possibly learned a trick or two from Michael Mann on the barely seen *Heat* spinoff *Robbery Homicide Division* (2002).

Of course *The X Files* added a dash of noir to its sci-fi, not least its shadowy cinematography. By contrast *BB* – which has noir themes at its black heart – wholeheartedly embraces the dazzling desert light of its Albuquerque, New Mexico setting, so that these darkest of deeds unfold in an incongruously bright and colourful palette. It’s a palette over which a great deal of care has been taken: the pilot was shot by John Toll, who shot *The Thin Red Line* for Terrence Malick; my wife has a theory about the colour-coding of the costume and production design that I won’t even begin to try and summarise here.

BB may be a writer’s show, but for television it’s also highly visual, to the extent that Albuquerque itself func-



tions as a metaphor for Walt’s psyche: a thin crust of suburban bungalow civilisation on top of a desert. It’s no accident that Walt and Jesse – in search of a safe place to ‘cook’ – turn Jesse’s RV into a mobile meth lab and drive it out into the desert. It’s as if Walt is deliberately leaving his conscious, civilised self behind to go on an excursion to his uncharted unconscious and embrace what Jung would call his ‘shadow’ and George Lucas his ‘dark side’. Except in the skewed world of *BB*, the dark side is very, very bright indeed.

The New Mexico desert setting also helps qualify *BB* as a western. Much is made of the black hat worn by Mr White after he loses his hair to chemotherapy. The fundamental theme of the western – that by doing ‘what a man’s gotta do’ to make society safe, you in the process make yourself unfit to live in that society – is reflected in microcosm in Walt’s family, as his heroic efforts to provide for his loved ones after his death lead to the breakdown of his marriage.

The stand-out episode in the first half of season 5, ‘Dead Freight’, even revolves around an elaborate train heist that’s as gripping and spectacular as any the big-screen Wild West had to offer. But crucially – and typically for *BB* – it’s more than just a set piece. The thrills and spectacle are just softening us up for another turn of the screw: the heist’s completely unexpected aftermath, perhaps the most shocking of all the crimes in which Walter White has been complicit. So far...

i The last eight episodes of *Breaking Bad* air in the US on AMC from 11 August, and will be available to view on Netflix in the UK from November 1

Whereas ‘The Sopranos’ showed us the ordinariness at the heart of an evil man, ‘Breaking Bad’ shows us the evil at the heart of an ordinary man

I AM THE DANGER
Walt’s attempts to provide for wife Skyler (Anna Gunn, top) lead him into the lawless realm of the New Mexico desert, below, with Jesse

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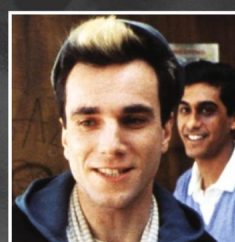


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AN ALAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Alan Partridge's promiscuous appearances on numerous media channels – via radio and TV series, chat shows, awards ceremonies and webisodes – perhaps made his big-screen debut inevitable. But they have also created a rolling satire of the media landscape over the last 20 years

By Ben Walters

In the last episode of the chat show *Knowing Me, Knowing You with Alan Partridge* (BBC2, 1994), the host is invited to Hollywood to audition for a blockbuster. "I have done acting," he assures his filmmaker guests. "I did a commercial for Ford's of Norwich... It was on the garage forecourt, surrounded by Ford Granadas... It's a bit of fun but it shows that I can handle big-screen action."

Combining heedless narcissism, inevitable deflation (the audition is, of course, a put-on) and middle-English cultural specificity, this is classic Partridge. Even at the pinnacle of his career, Alan is primed for failure; soon, he will shoot a guest dead, ostensibly killing his mainstream career to boot.

Yet, two decades on, Alan is braced for big-screen action at last. *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa* sees the character embroiled in an armed siege at the local radio station where he now works, and includes a shoot-out, a car chase and a shot at redemption – all, admittedly, of the low-impact variety. "It's tempting to do something huge and spectacular-looking," says the film's co-writer, Armando Iannucci. "But you lose the intimacy, so we decided to keep it small. Claustrophobically small." But the question remains: how has a character so strongly identified with bitterness and failure proven so resilient? Who is Alan Partridge, and why?

Literally speaking, he's a comic character invented by Steve Coogan, who plays him, with Iannucci and the other creators of *On the Hour* (BBC Radio 4, 1991-2), the spoof news programme fronted by Chris Morris for which Alan was sports reporter. His bullish tone, profound ignorance and garbled metaphors (cyclists look from above "like cattle, but cattle on bikes") made him a natural foil for Morris's acerbic anchor. But it was Alan's atrocious interpersonal skills and incuriosity that made him a comedic gift to the world of chat.

Putting him up against fictional guests, his own spin-off series, *Knowing Me, Knowing You with Alan Partridge* (Radio 4, 1992), showcased Alan's inability to listen, his prickly defensiveness and his prudish small-mindedness, as well as his attachment to a certain stratum of brand signifier encompassing the *Daily Mail*, World of Leather sofas, Jean-Michel Jarre and Julie's Pantry at Chippenham services. Such details comprised just one aspect of the nuanced characterisation beneath the bluster; we also learned in passing of Alan's unfaithful wife and alienated teenage children, the childhood experiences underlying his neuroses (including his compulsive declaration of his own name) and, crucially, his career frustrations.



BANDE A PARTRIDGE

Steve Coogan's richly nuanced portrait of the Norfolk DJ, left and above in *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*, combines heedless narcissism, prickly defensiveness and prudish parochialism

Alan's chippiness, which led him to perceive almost every guest as a threat – in a sense, he's always been under siege – was in constant tension with his professional ambition. The mechanics of the media industry were made unusually explicit through frequent references to researchers, contracts, lawyers, reviews and, in the final episode, Alan's excruciating on-air courtship of BBC television's incoming commissioning editor, Tony Hayers (series regular David Schneider). "At the time," Coogan recalls, "having someone talk about the producers and his production company was seen as something the public would not be interested in. But lots of people understand the media these days. It's not a mystery. People are fascinated by the belly of the beast."

Both *KMKY* and *On the Hour* transferred to BBC2 in 1994 (the latter as *The Day Today*), familiarising audiences with Alan's trademark 'sports casual' look of dubious side-parted hair weave, boxy blazers and Pringle knitwear. Contemporary broadcasting remained a live topic, especially *KMKY*'s supposedly poor ratings. (Its host blamed "some sort of a conspiracy" by BBC2 producers, "in their baggy linen suits and their flip-flops".) Alan's accidental shooting of a guest with an antique pistol nudged this alienation effect into formal disruption: cameras reeled, an ident card flashed up momentarily and Alan wailed "what happens now?" before solemnly delivering his catchphrase to arriving police officers. A festive one-off, *Knowing Me, Knowing Yule* (1995), ended with Alan revealing that his wife had left him, scuppering his chances of a second series, assaulting Tony Hayers and wandering the studio floor in a daze.

◀ *KMKY* was a wicked genre pastiche of an all-but moribund format; arguably, it even gave real TV chat a shot in the arm, offering a tongue-in-cheek approach fruitfully applied by fictional personae such as Mrs Merton and Ali G to real-life guests. But its real potency lay in its portrayal of a psychologically sophisticated character pursuing an enterprise for which he was manifestly unsuited, like Anthony Aloysius Hancock, Harold Steptoe and Basil Fawlty before him and David Brent after. It was fitting, then, that Alan's next incarnation should take the form of a sitcom.

The closest US analogue here is *The Larry Sanders Show* (HBO, 1992-98), which alternated between talk-show host Larry (Garry Shandling) on air with his guests, all smiles, and backstage, all neurosis. Alan always lacked Larry's guile – what you see is what you get – but formally speaking, *I'm Alan Partridge* (BBC2, 1997) took us behind the scenes. Now writing mostly with Peter Baynham, rather than *KMKY*'s Patrick Marber, Coogan and Iannucci presented Alan *agonistes*. Visibly aged, he was working the graveyard slot at Radio Norwich (in his beloved home town), living in a 'Travel Tavern' and venting his frustrations on his mousy assistant. The show's opening episode memorably featured his final encounter with Tony Hayers, who rejected all of Alan's new TV pitches – some of which, like *Cooking in Prison*, have since been made – leaving only low-rent career options like promotional videos and personal appearances.

This Alan is at once trapped and without moorings, a status reflected literally through the use of four-walled sets and handheld cameras and expressionistically in fantasy sequences, in which this "media whore without any punters" pole-dances for prospective employers. By the second series, in 2002, Alan seemed finally to have shucked his Oedipal relationship with the BBC, gaining an annoying Ukrainian girlfriend, a new home (under construction) and gigs hosting a military-based cable-television quiz show and motorway-mishap videos. "Terrestrial TV," he sneers, "is a dead duck."

We're far from both genre pastiche and conventional sitcom here: the show's *cod-vérité* approach anticipated not only Iannucci's political satire *The Thick of It* (2005-12) but a raft of UK sitcoms, from *The Royle Family* and *The Office* to *Him & Her*. We're also far from viewing Alan on his own terms: our awareness of our status as fly-on-the-wall observers underlines the lack of a diegetic audience for the first time in the character's existence. Consciousness of the validating presence, or demoralising absence, of the camera is the mirrored heart of post-Warholian media culture and the concern around which Alan's uniquely distributed career orbits.

For, unlike other pathetic ogres of British TV comedy such as Fawlty or Brent, Alan is not associated with a single title; inhabiting an increasingly fragmented media landscape, the character reaches us through multiple channels. His own series aside, he has appeared at numerous award shows, quibbling over BBC policy at the Baftas, perving over All Saints at the Brits, duetting with Elton John at the British Comedy Awards. He's a regular on Comic Relief, promoting himself, getting humiliated and noting the frequently low standard of sketches. He interviews real stars (Roger Daltrey, Bryan Ferry) and is interviewed in character (*Clive Anderson All Talk*, *The*

Jonathan Ross Show). And he appears in Coogan's live shows, presenting motivational speeches or pet projects, such as *I Am More*, in which he compares himself to the martyred Tudor statesman. "Changing formats keeps it fresh for us," Iannucci says. "It's not like we're now into season 12 of a sitcom."

Such promiscuity allows space to open up between the character on his own terms and the character observed; Alan as auteur, if you will, and Alan as object. The latter mode (eg *I'm Alan Partridge*) is essentially an exercise in fish-out-of-water comedy, while the former rests on the absurdity of the misguided visionary. A good instance is *Anglian Lives* (BBC2, 2003), a profile of Alan whose status as vanity project is revealed through its incompetent and charmless execution, from the presenter's introduction of Alan as "a vigorous all-rounder with a fascinating past and an amazing future" to the shoddy production values (phones go off during interviews).

Cumulatively, these shifts comprise a rolling satire of the UK media landscape at a time of seismic change. "It's not a grand plan," Coogan maintains, "but we try to be an expression of the zeitgeist and that includes the media." Alan, he continues, is the kind of character who would keep an eye on production trends and try his luck. "We used to have him talking about the information superhighway, which was already an outmoded

UNDER SIEGE

An assault by a disgruntled fellow DJ in *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*, below, ups the stakes from the days of BBC2's *Knowing Me, Knowing You*, right, but the character's desires and goals are the same as always



phrase when he used it. He feels it's probably important and wants to be part of it, whatever it is."

The character's embrace of the internet, and an outstanding example of 'Alan observed', came in 2010 with *Mid-Morning Matters with Alan Partridge*, a series of 15-minute shorts created for Foster's lager's YouTube channel and later broadcast on Sky. (Coogan and Iannucci are here writing with Neil and Rob Gibbons.) With Alan now working for North Norfolk Digital radio, MMM was ostensibly culled from live-streaming studio webcams. Alan's going digital ushered in a new generation of fans, including Iannucci's children: "Suddenly I was very cool because I was making things for YouTube. Never mind television – nobody watches that."

The locked-off rigour of the formal approach yielded rich material. This is a more relaxed Alan; he still enjoys a dig at the BBC or his ex-wife but is in his element hosting call-ins on, say, what car historical monarchs would drive. Working relationships remain fraught but hapless comic foil 'Side Kick Simon' (Tim Key) shows Alan isn't incapable of a mentoring role, while his crush on a younger female co-presenter is rather touching.

The point here is that, again unlike most iconic comic characters, Alan changes. "It's as if his ups and downs have been played out in real time," Iannucci suggests. "Whenever Steve and I meet up, even if we're not working on Alan, we talk about what he's doing. We're privately continuing the biography." The character's post-*I'm Alan Partridge* dormancy might have helped here. "We weren't straitjacketed by the need to mimic the character of 2002," says Neil Gibbons. "He'd moved on and changed in the way a normal person would have changed." He's even come to terms with the gays, thanks to a day at a boat show with Dale Winton. "We never wanted him to be an Alf Garnett character who's only there to espouse unhealthy opinions and become a bit of a folk hero," says Iannucci. He evolves, if not quite in sync with enlightened society, then a consistent couple of steps behind.

Recently, Alan's auteur streak has become more pronounced. The character's substantial backstory was beefed up to form the 'memoir' *I, Partridge: We Need to Talk About Alan* (2011), whose myriad self-aggrandising anecdotes and self-justifying inconsistencies come into their own in audiobook form. The book was ruthlessly promoted on the faux arts show *Alan Partridge on Open Books with Martin Bryce*, while the Norfolk-based *Alan Partridge: Welcome to the Places of My Life* (both Sky, 2012) was a televisual companion piece, larding on off-the-shelf infographics, mismatched interview 'noddies' and pastiches of historical-documentary tropes.

And now comes *Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa*, which shares a setting and writers with *Mid-Morning Matters*. Past movie plans involved relocating Alan to the US or UAE, or pitching him against jihadis. "We were wrong to think of it in too-big terms," says Coogan. "It's not *Die Hard*. Keep it small but make it significant." Two key rules emerged, says Rob Gibbons: "It had to be in Norfolk and the story had to be about all the petty things that drive Alan, his desire to be a successful broadcaster chief among them. The stakes are higher but his desires and goals are the same as always."

Modest setting notwithstanding, it's just the sort of story Alan – a devotee of James Bond and Andy McNab,



and aspiring US sky marshall – would write himself into. But although the trailer showed him discussing possible movie titles (*Colossal Velocity?* *Chap of Steel?*), the Alan of *Alpha Papa* is more object than auteur. There's a whiff of *Hot Fuzz* about the film's bathetic contrast of quotidian Norfolk and bland broadcasting with the mechanics of an armed siege: a set piece is built around an ultimatum to create a jingle in an hour; Alan repeatedly flubs opportunities to embody the valour of the "three Jasons" (Bourne, Statham and Argonaut).

How, then, to have Alan evince some kind of heroism without foregoing the venality hardwired into his character? Make it about media professionalism, of course. The backdrop to the siege is the takeover of North Norfolk Digital by a rapacious media conglomerate; the gunman is a veteran DJ turfed out, at Alan's self-interested suggestion, as part of the restructuring. As designated negotiator, Alan achieves a level of fame to which he has been unaccustomed since *Knowing Me, Knowing You*. "This is because you're on TV, isn't it?" a colleague says of his newfound cockiness. "You're all puffed up like a robin."

The crunch comes when Alan is obliged to weigh careerist vanity against the love of broadcasting. "He's reluctant to put himself in danger and tries to make the situation work to his own ends," Coogan acknowledges, "but he doesn't want to do the wrong thing. We wanted to say that you should laugh at these small-time local radio DJs but dignify them in the end. They're not financially motivated, they're trying to provide a service to a community and big multinationals come along and suck the personality out of them and turn them into another asset for their shareholders." If *Alpha Papa* allows Alan a new righteousness, it reads as credible in the context of an evolving character. I asked the film's director, Declan Lowney, whether Alan would ever be the same again. "Well, he's never been the same, really," he noted.

So, where will he go next? Might Alan the auteur come into his own? He once described an idea for a novel, set in the year 3000, in which "everyone has a 3D TV on their wrist and they travel round on monorails like the one in Gatwick Airport. It's very futuristic. It's set in the aftermath of a nuclear ratings war... and TV presenter Jack Jupiter has 24 hours to do something. I've not figured out what yet." That sounds like movie gold. And should Alan pursue funding, he can finally claim to have proved he can handle big-screen action. "Never say never," Neil Gibbons suggests. "There's not much he thinks he can't do..."



Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa is released on 7 August and will be reviewed in our next issue

It's tempting to do something huge and spectacular-looking, but you lose the intimacy – so we decided to keep it small. Claustrophobically small

SATYAJIT RAY

A MORAL ATTITUDE

To coincide with a three-month BFI retrospective of Satyajit Ray's work and the release of five of his films on Blu-ray, the following interview has been compiled from a long series of conversations Andrew Robinson had with the great Indian director while researching his biography 'Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye', in the years before Ray's death in 1992

By Andrew Robinson

BENGAL LENSER
Satyajit Ray, opposite,
on location in Contai,
West Bengal in 1970,
scouting locations for
his film *The Adversary*

Andrew Robinson: What would you say is your moral attitude as a filmmaker?

Satyajit Ray: I don't like to be too articulate about it because it's all there in the films. One has to see the films and read them. I don't begin by formulating a moral attitude and then making a film. I think it's the business of the critic to form his own conclusions. I don't want to add footnotes to it. I'm very unwilling to do that.

AR: Have your moral attitudes to people and society changed since your first film *Pather Panchali* (1955)? Have you become more cynical?

SR: Not necessarily. I have become more aware of my surroundings. I was probably a little isolated from things in the early days, being so immersed in my various pursuits. I can imagine other young people being more aware of, say, politics. I was not. I gave more time to my intellectual pursuits. I was developing myself as an artist. And I had so many interests right from the beginning that I felt I couldn't take on any more.

AR: If you have strong artistic gifts, do you think politics are almost irrelevant?

SR: If you are a filmmaker of course your surroundings, politics and whatnot make up the social milieu – that becomes relevant. From 1960 onwards I was becoming more aware of my surroundings and introducing more of such elements into my films, apart from what is contained in the plotline itself. *Company Limited* [*Seemabad-dha*, 1971] need not have had a reference to politics but there are bombs being heard at the cocktail party and people make comments about that. Just as the



element of load-shedding [power cuts] is there: the broken lift and all that. That film was not about mechanical gadgets failing, but they enriched the story.

AR: *The Big City* [Mahanagar, 1963] shows the impact on family life when a middle-class Calcutta housewife gets a job. Is the working woman's dilemma something you saw in your own family?

SR: My wife used to work before we got married, at what was the Supply Department during the war. And she worked as a teacher. [As a result], one understood the story [by Narendranath Mitra] and the context in which the story took place. Therefore you make the story not like an outsider, but as if you're part of the milieu. It was easy because the story was very revealing, and many of the elements in the film came from the story.

AR: Relationships are very strong elements in your films, especially within families.

SR: That may be said to be a speciality of mine. It comes naturally to me, instinctively. I think I understand human psychology.

AR: Are relationships on the screen difficult to establish?

SR: Everything in a film is difficult. There's no easy solution to anything at all. It needs thought and careful observation and it needs calculation and understanding.

AR: Did growing up in an extended family with your mother in the house of your maternal uncles help you in depicting psychology on screen?

SR: I must have been observing a great deal in my childhood about people, because of being a loner, in the sense that I had no brothers or sisters, and I was alone much of the time with my thoughts and with my little preoccupations. So this process has probably been going on a long time even without my being aware of it. I was surrounded by people who were all older than me. I was the youngest. I must have imbibed a lot in my childhood.

AR: You once told *Sight & Sound* that you had never consciously analysed whether you were part of a tradition or not. That surprises me.

SR: No, I have not. Does one have to? I don't know. I mean, you do your work.

AR: Would you ever call yourself a humanist?

SR: Not really. I can't think of being anything else but what is represented by my films. I am not conscious of *being* a humanist. It's simply that I am interested in human beings. I would imagine that everyone who makes a film is to some extent interested in human beings... I'm slightly irritated [laughs] by this constant reference to humanism in my work—I feel that there are other elements also. It's not just about human beings. It's also a structure, a form, a rhythm, a face, a temple, a feeling for light and shade, composition, and a way of telling a story.

AR: I suppose it was *Pather Panchali* that made critics label you a humanist. What do you think of that film now?

SR: I would re-edit the film. It would improve. The pace sometimes falters, not in the second half though. We shot the film in sequence, and we learned as we went along, and so the second half hangs together much better. But it would definitely improve with cutting. And there are certain things we couldn't do anything about, like camera placements. I don't think the relationship of the three little cottages [within the family house where Apu grows up] is very clear in the film. Because you see, in a film, you have to choose a master angle which you have to keep repeating so that people get their bearings. If you keep



The really crucial moments in a film should be wordless. Where you want to make a crucial point – it's better if it's made visually rather than verbally



THE WORLD OF RAY
Clockwise from top: after capturing the rhythms of village life in *Pather Panchali*, Ray focused on the state of modern India in films such as *Kanchenjunga*, *The Hero* and *The Big City*



RE: NATIONAL ARCHIVE (3)

changing the camera angle, it becomes very confusing. In your mind the plan is very clear but to make it clear on the screen you have to use certain devices which we didn't know at the time.

AR: As your career progressed, you seemed to go more and more for stories that take place in a much shorter span of time than the Apu trilogy, especially in your original screenplays, such as *Kanchenjunga* (1962), *The Hero* (Nayak, 1966) and the short *Pikoo* (1980).

SR: Yes, I lost my taste for the saga kind of story after the Apu trilogy. Too many lapses of time. It's a kind of novelistic approach. For the cinema it's much better to be more concentrated in time. It's an instinctive feeling: I can't put it into words *why* I feel like that. The film's better if the period is a day or a week or fortnight or a month, so that nobody grows up: everybody's as they were in the beginning.

AR: What do you think is distinctively Indian about Indian art? What qualities are found in it that are not found in other art?

SR: Indian art is not one thing. Indian art is so many different schools and styles. [Nevertheless] I think lyricism, the love of nature, the symbolic aspect of art (like showing rain in a few lines of dots in a Rajput miniature)... The looking for the essence in natural forms and human forms, and then going for the essence rather than the surface – that I think is primarily what distinguishes Indian art from Western art. Not just Indian art but Eastern art in general. Chinese and Japanese art also, if you come to think about it, have the same qualities as Indian art.

AR: In an article on Kurosawa's films you spoke of this oriental quality in art. Would Kurosawa fit into your view of Eastern art?

SR: Kurosawa I do not consider a very oriental artist. Kurosawa is 50 per cent Western, I think.

AR: What about you?

SR: Yes, so am I, I think – which makes me more accessible to a Western audience than someone who's not to the same extent influenced by Western models. I think Ozu and Mizoguchi are far more Eastern in that way.

AR: And Rabindranath Tagore, whose novels and stories you have adapted?

SR: Rabindranath I don't know – he's a completely isolated phenomenon. I find it very difficult to classify him, to put him into a pigeonhole.

AR: Talking of Tagore, what was the process of thought in *Charulata* (1964) that led to your decision to end the film with a freeze-frame on the hands of Charu and her husband Bhupati, followed by the still images of them and the servant carrying a lamp?

SR: That was not in the script. In the script the husband accepts her hand and the two of them walk back into the bedroom, seen from a distance – we see the entire veranda. The original story ends with one single word. Bhupati is about to go to Mysore and Charu suddenly tells him, "Take me with you." And he hesitates and Charu says "thak", which means "let that be" in Bengali. This was a kind of very abrupt, logical conclusion to the story, and I wanted a visual equivalent of the *thak* – instead of the word, an image, which would suggest that the two are about to be reconciled and then are prevented from doing so.

I couldn't end with the word because I have a feeling that the really crucial moments in a film should be word-



LIGHT AND SHADE
Charulata is one of several Satyajit Ray films adapted from the writings of Rabindranath Tagore

less. The really crucial transitions and climaxes, where you want to make a crucial point – it's better if it's made visually rather than verbally. So my ending is the visual equivalent of the word: they attempt to come together but the idea is that the process will take time.

AR: What about the servant's lamp?

SR: Light is always associated with awakening or understanding. And the servant also stops. These are still photographs that come at the end after the freeze. It's very difficult to express what was precisely meant to be achieved with that series of still shots, but something told me instinctively it would be the right conclusion for the film. I can't explain beyond that.

AR: And what about that final mysterious shot of *The Big City*, with one bulb in the Calcutta streetlight working and the other one missing. What did you have in mind there?

SR: The double lamp happened to be like that. The shot was taken from the balcony of the office where we shot most of the exteriors. It so happened that I needed a long shot of the two characters merging into the crowd after office hours. And I saw, as I tilted up the camera as they were walking away, a lovely shot of these two lights in the foreground. One of the bulbs was not working and [laughs] – my God – the amount of interpretation that has taken place because of that one missing light is incredible!

I had nothing in mind. I didn't want to suggest anything at all, except that it was typical of Calcutta for the streetlights not to be working properly... It makes the shot more interesting, because it adds another layer of meaning to it which I'm afraid was not intended. As I discovered it, I was quite happy. I felt it was better than both lights working.

AR: What meaning would you attribute to it now?

SR: I don't know – it just shows a lyrical side of Calcutta.

AR: There's no symbolic meaning?

SR: No. ☺

i A Ray retrospective runs until 5 October at BFI Southbank, London. *The Big City* is rereleased in UK cinemas on 16 August. Five Ray films – including *The Big City*, *Charulata* and *The Hero* – are released on Blu-ray in the UK by Artificial Eye on 12 August.

£ A longer version of this interview will be available online at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

DESIGN FOR LIVING

As well as writing, directing and sometimes scoring his films, Ray was an accomplished graphic artist who worked in advertising and publishing

By Andrew Robinson

Satyajit Ray famously became a film director without any formal training, other than some friendly advice from Jean Renoir during the Frenchman's visits to Bengal to make his 1951 film *The River*. It's less well known that, having originally trained to be a painter at India's best-known art school in Rabindranath Tagore's university, Ray abandoned fine art as a career and took his first job as a graphic artist in a British-run, Calcutta-based

advertising agency. There he worked for over ten years until he resigned after the success of his first film *Pather Panchali* in 1955.

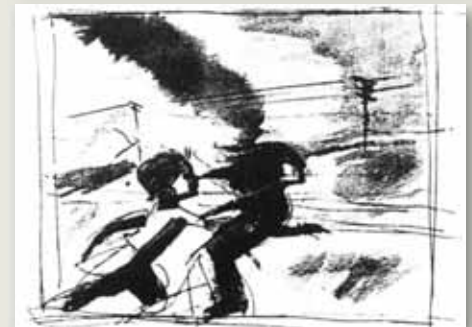
"How does one design soap wrappings one day and shape the contours of a celluloid saga the next?" he wrote sardonically in 1965, before concluding: "Somebody – I do not remember who – has defined the Cinema as the highest form of commercial art. After ten years in this profession, I have no quarrel with that definition."

Ray's flair for art and design – which was surely inherited from his grandfather Upendrakishore and father Sukumar, both of whom are celebrated book and magazine illustrators in Bengal – was evident throughout his career. Apart from the skill and humour of some of his advertising campaigns, in the 1940s Ray designed dozens of book jackets, becoming in effect India's leading book designer, and also created some classic illustrations for an abridged

edition of Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel *Pather Panchali*, which first provoked his interest in the idea of making a film. Later, in the 1960s, he revived, edited and illustrated his grandfather's magazine for children, *Sandesh*, which published some of his own bestselling fiction.

In his films, Ray was responsible not only for sketching, shot by shot, his entire shooting script, but also for drawing and painting fine and detailed portraits of the film's characters, set designs and costume designs. In addition, he designed some remarkable posters for the release of his films in Bengal, as well as the calligraphy and typography of the films' credit sequences; he even created two prize-winning English typefaces, Ray Roman and Ray Bizarre, for an international competition in 1971.

Pather Panchali never had a fully developed script, only a set of delightful wash drawings prepared by Ray in 1951–52 to try to interest



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potential producers (without success), and later a sheaf of notes and sketches. But from his second film *Aparajito* (1956) onwards, Ray wrote a full script in a bulky notebook bound in coarse red cloth, of a kind generally used by North Calcutta merchants for keeping their accounts.

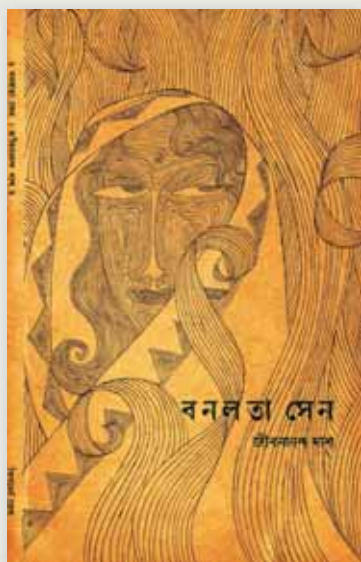
Almost everything about a Ray film is to be found somewhere in these notebooks: not only dialogue and shot divisions, but also background research, set and costume designs, sketches of characters and potential actors (with names and phone numbers), songs and musical ideas, sketches for posters, and lots of doodles. Only the budget is absent.

To leaf through them is to be admitted into the inner sanctum of his creative process. The final shooting script, with its legible dialogue and outline sketches of camera angles and shots, is orderly enough. But one is surprised, in so methodical an artist as Ray, by how jumbled the rest of the notebook seems. In

some places, when writing the first draft of a scene, Ray's racing fountain pen jumps entire pages; in others he squeezes the dialogue between narrow self-imposed margins or scribbles it higgledy-piggledy up the page. It is as if too linear an approach might block the flow of words tumbling from his imagination.

Ray's early training as a painter undoubtedly gave him unusual sensitivity as the designer of his films, working closely with his art director Bansi Chandragupta up to and including the lavish period film *The Chess Players* (*Shatranj ke Khilari*) in 1977. Without making his films aesthetic, he infused them with a painter's feeling for form, texture, colour and composition. ❸

i An exhibition of Satyajit Ray's poster designs, drawing on the collections of the BFI National Archive and the Society for the Preservation of Satyajit Ray Archives and Ray Estate, Kolkata is at BFI Southbank, London until mid-October



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1. WOODCUT ILLUSTRATIONS FOR A NOVEL, 1944

Ray illustrated *Am Antir Bhenpu* (*Mango-stone Whistle*), an abridged edition for children of *Pather Panchali*, the classic 1929 Bengali novel by Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay. Ray's interest in filming the story started here, and intensified when he read the full-length novel not long afterwards – though he didn't begin work on a film script until 1950.

2. DRAWINGS FOR A FILM TREATMENT OF 'PATHER PANCHALI', 1952

These drawings are part of a purely visual treatment of the story sketched for the purpose of raising interest from Bengali film producers. They show what would become one of the most famous sequences in the film, in which Apu and Durga wander in a field of white *kaash* (pampas grass) and see their first train.

3. BOOK JACKET, 1952

Ray began designing book jackets in the mid-1940s for Signet Press in Calcutta and continued to design them, off and on, for the rest of his life. "The jackets I was really proud of were the jackets for the poetry books," he said; they included this jacket for a collection of poetry by Jibanananda Das, the title of which is taken from a celebrated poem, 'Banalata Sen', written in 1934.

4. POSTER FOR THE RELEASE OF 'DEVI' ('THE GODDESS'), 1960

The story of *Devi* concerns a lovely young woman in a wealthy family in mid-19th-century Bengal, whose orthodox father-in-law dreams that she is an incarnation of the goddess Kali and begins to worship her. The poster alludes graphically to the dream sequence, in which the girl's red forehead mark is transformed into the third eye of the goddess.

5. MAGAZINE COVERS

The four covers on the left are for *Sandesh*, a Bengali monthly children's magazine founded by Satyajit Ray's grandfather and revived by him and others in 1961. Each cover plays with the letters of the title, a word with the dual meanings 'News' and 'Sweetmeat'. "I normally spend seven or eight months a year on filmmaking, the rest on *Sandesh*," said Ray.

The four covers on the right are for *Eksan*, a Bengali literary and cultural magazine founded in 1961, which was published for three decades with a cover by Ray. Using the three Bengali letters of the title, which means 'Now', Ray gave rein to his fascination with typography. *Eksan* published many of his screenplays, sometimes with his notes, as well as occasional articles by Ray.



WAYS OF SEEING

In 'Museum Hours' experimental filmmaker Jem Cohen looks at how we look at each other and make connections in a transient world with images of the past and the present

By Sophie Mayer

Over the end credits of Jem Cohen's latest film, *Museum Hours*, an acoustic guitar track plays, haunting, unresolving. It's an instrumental version of a song by US singer-songwriter Liz Durrett, niece of Cohen's long-time collaborator and friend Vic Chesnutt, who died in 2009. The song is called 'Stop the Projector', and its placement at the end of the film is both witty and profound. Its equation of the disappearance of the image and death – that if we are not seeing, we are not being – runs through the film.

In a celebrity culture in which being seen is being, Cohen's work with musicians such as REM, Godspeed You Black Emperor, Patti Smith, Elliott Smith and Fugazi, as well as Chesnutt, imagines otherwise. As Michael Almereyda notes in his interview with Cohen in *Artforum*

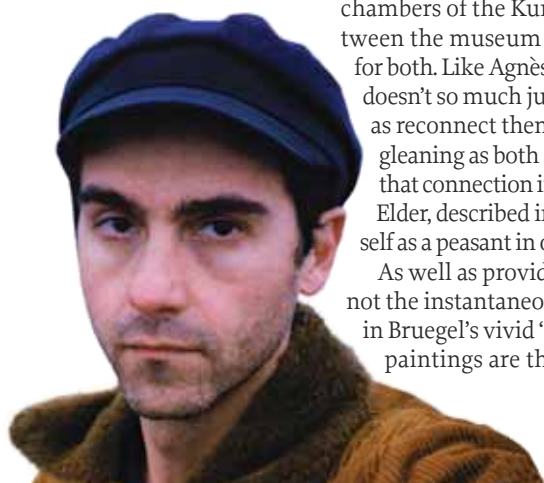
in 2005, the most striking moment in *Instrument* (1999), his Super-8 Fugazi tour documentary, comes not from seeing the band on stage but from the series of portraits of fans queuing for the shows. Spectral, almost feral, these portraits of people *waiting* to see – being seen in their desire to see – are a keynote of Cohen's art.

In *Museum Hours*, as in his first narrative feature *Chain* (2004), Cohen casts non-professional actors in the three speaking roles. Johann, the film's protagonist and narrator, is played by Bobby Sommer, whom Cohen met through the Viennale, where Sommer works, and whose life story (managing punk bands) informs Johann's. By contrast Anne, a visitor to the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum where Johann works, is played by Mary Margaret O'Hara, the notoriously publicity-shy Canadian singer. Like the UK's Kate Bush, O'Hara resisted the music business's expectations as to how she would perform as a female celebrity; as a result, she will be unfamiliar to many of the film's viewers. The two songs she sings in the film are her first original material recorded since 2000.

When we first see Anne, only the back of her head



THE EYES HAVE IT
Johann (Bobby Sommer)
is a benign expert in the art
of observation in the equally
perceptive new film by Jem
Cohen (below)



is visible as she talks on the phone; her profile and full face are revealed over many scenes. The shift is repeated just before she leaves Vienna and the film: as she sings to herself, we see only the back of her head, before there is a cut to a profile. Cohen has a singular gift for the non-intrusive gaze – for making his act of looking as a filmmaker something that reveals rather than commodifies. His filmmaking practice is rooted in street photography which, as Colin Westerbeck points out in the monumental history he edited with photographer Joel Meyerowitz, is a genre unique to camera technology. Westerbeck emphasises instantaneity, but Cohen's move to film underlines another key quality: anonymity. Both the photographer and the subject are anonymous, to each other and to the world at large – yet, paradoxically, achieve a kind of known-ness (to each other, and to the viewer of the picture) through the shared action of creating the photograph.

The film opens with an artful shot of Johann framed by the mighty oak door behind him, and roped off like the paintings. Later, he describes his job as “looking at the visitors”. Both the shot and the statement productively undermine the looking relations that museums appear to set up: art hangs; visitors look at it; guards ‘surveil’ their behaviour. For both visitors and guards, the art is inert and framed by its monetary value. By contrast, Cohen presents Johann as a framed art object for our contemplation, but simultaneously makes him active, looking back at us, the viewers. Rather than undertaking a paranoid form of surveillance, he is both a practised observer showing us how to look and a guardian angel – noticing, for instance, the student who might shyly linger behind his school group to look at the erotic contours of a classical male nude.

This work of being alive to what he sees leads Johann to form the relationship that drives the film, offering assistance to flustered Montréal Anne. Their fleeting connection is reminiscent of Cohen's previous feature *Chain*, where the title metamorphosed from a description of the economic and linguistic barriers separating the two female protagonists to an evocation of the fragile possibility of connection between them.

Johann and Anne's friendship begins with his explanation of a map of the city but progresses through looking at paintings, connecting what's inside and outside the museum. *Museum Hours* arrives at a moment when such distinctions are being challenged, with street photography finding a home in museums, particularly in London's Tate Modern, with its exhibitions on surveillance, and of the work of William Klein and Daido Moriyama. Cohen's film practises street photography in the hushed chambers of the Kunsthistorisches, and cross-cuts between the museum and the streets with equal regard for both. Like Agnès Varda in *The Gleaners and I*, Cohen doesn't so much juxtapose classical art and urban life as reconnect them; while Varda used the practice of gleaning as both subject and metaphor, Cohen roots that connection in the paintings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, described in the film as having disguised himself as a peasant in order to paint their lives.

As well as providing a genealogy for the themes (if not the instantaneous practice) of street photography in Bruegel's vivid ‘snapshots’ of lived experience, the paintings are the subject of a centrepiece discus-

sion by lecturer Gerda, who firmly leads her tour group to perceive the world differently – to look at the horse's ass instead of acting like one. In contrast to their pat, presumptive statements about Bruegel's greatness, piety and timelessness, she encourages them – and us – to take time with the pictures, and to see time in them: Bruegel's time, our time and the unfolding of time itself.

NEW VISION

Like *Chain*, the title of *Museum Hours* alters and expands: from referring to a set of limitations on access to high culture to suggesting the dilation of time made possible by what the museum saves from time – the time it asks us to spend looking. At the film's end, Johann describes, in voiceover, Super-8 images which become firmly located in Vienna and the present, making it clear that Johann is watching the film we are seeing. While voiceovers are frequently used in documentaries to *direct* the viewer, it's a beautifully democratic gesture to locate the voiceover character in the audience, watching the film as we are.

In the final shots, Johann describes “a store that once housed a locksmith, but now has orange plastic in its window”, like the museum that now includes film, photography, installation and found art; and a junk shop “that is, by some strange decree, only open between four and six”. Cohen's interest in art classified as marginal, found and outsider reframes the Kunsthistorisches as a junk shop with odd opening hours.

These closing shots of Vienna's streets occur from canted angles reminiscent of CCTV cameras, as if they were part of a surveillance humanised by Cohen's approach. Control of the image is re-democratised; the film's shots of museum visitors using cameraphones and audio guides are documentary rather than judgemental. Here, the film says, is a culture trying on new ways of looking: both disruptive and productive, necessary and uncomfortable. The sequences inside the museum were shot on digital, intercut with Super-8 exteriors, an investigation into new technologies of vision.

Yet the film also locates this experimentation in the classical painting that Anne and Johann first discuss: one of the Kunsthistorisches's four flower still-life studies by Jan ‘Flower’ Bruegel, son of the better-known ‘peasant painter’. Anne reads that the younger Bruegel was the first to paint one flower stem in front of another, a metaphor that could describe *Museum Hours*' insistence on seeing everything in terms of its relation to each other rather than in terms of hierarchy or separation.

Anne notes that the foremost flower in these paintings is a black mourning iris, a phrase that could be read as a description of the film's gaze: as if looking with eyes darkened by observing poverty, illness and death, not only in the hospital and the street but also – as a montage of severed-head paintings shows – inside the museum itself. At the end of the film, as Anne looks out of the window in a pose similar to the opening shot, she sings: “In the darkness, you'll see so clearly.” This is the film's manifesto for cinema – but beyond that, for ways of looking. Although she looks the same, Anne's looking has been altered profoundly by her friendship with Johann during her cousin's coma and death. Alive with all she has seen, she comes into view just in time to disappear.

i *Museum Hours* is released in the UK
on 6 September and is reviewed on page 79

ENIGMA VARIATIONS

A unique figure in contemporary US indie cinema, Shane Carruth writes, directs, produces, shoots, edits, scores and stars in his utterly unclassifiable film puzzles, following up his cult time-travel debut 'Primer' with the tantalisingly enigmatic 'Upstream Color'

By Jonathan Romney



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GETTY IMAGES

American director Shane Carruth specialises in mystification, of the best kind. His two features so far have inspired audiences with the dizzy euphoria that comes from being invited to participate in an unusually intense cognitive and emotional game, of which the rules must be learned on the run.

A maths graduate and former designer of flight-simulation software turned self-trained screen polymath, Carruth emerged in 2004 with his debut feature *Primer*, a time-travel story made for an alleged \$7000, which he wrote, directed, edited and designed, as well as playing the lead and composing the score. The film was at once mind-bendingly byzantine and ingeniously economical, and its delirious narrative paradoxes give rise to an enthusiastic outpouring of explicative theories and diagrams, a whole online subculture offering primers on *Primer*.

After nearly a decade, Carruth has returned with an even more tantalisingly enigmatic follow-up. Since its premiere in Sundance in January, *Upstream Color* has spurred an ecstatic frenzy of critical commentary; with its references to *Walden*, Thoreau's classic 19th-century American text on rural self-sufficiency, the film has inspired some elegant philosophical exegeses, as well as coverage in highbrow literary platforms such as *The New York Review of Books*.

If *Primer* could be categorised as a hyper-rarefied variant on a familiar science-fiction sub-genre, Carruth's dif-

ferently tantalising follow-up moves into more mysterious territory. *Upstream Color* can be taken as narrative puzzle, philosophical contemplation, impressionistic film poem, vertiginous exploration of screen language – however you approach it, it's an intensely strange and seductive film that builds from quasi-Cronenbergian paranoid thriller to a cinema of intense lyrical rapture. It may even mark the emergence of a new strain of narrative film language, one with recognisable forebears – the anti-linearity of Resnais in the 1960s, Roeg in the 1970s – but one that is peculiar to Carruth, and which requires us to engage with his singular mindset, on his terms.

In *Primer*, which is about two men accidentally creating a time machine, the viewer's first task is simply to assemble the narrative jigsaw into something like a coherent readable pattern. The more elusive *Upstream Color* invites us to engage on a deeper emotional and associative level with a subtle intermeshing of image, sound and thematic nuance. The two films, Carruth told me when I interviewed him in London recently, "are both veiled for different reasons. But this one is really trying to change the form that it exists in – it's trying to change the rules. It's trying to adopt a language that we've come to understand – and then, proving that it understands that language, it's trying to push it as far as it'll go."

The plot of *Upstream Color* is exceptionally slippery, partly because of the density of ellipses and

TUB-THUMPER
Shane Carruth, far left, wrote and directed *Upstream Color*, and also plays Jeff, below with Kris (Amy Seimetz)





I'm an obsessive. It really does feel like it's a million-piece puzzle and I just drop all the million pieces on the floor and find a way to screw them together

← parallelisms, partly because of the strikingly anti-realistic use of bizarre narrative elements (pigs, orchids, sound recordings, nematodes), all threaded into a love story between two damaged people. But Carruth has insisted that, far from inviting an ungoverned interpretative free-for-all, the film tends towards a 'correct' reading: "I think there's only one way to view this film – in a way where all the pieces make sense."

Here's a partial attempt at synopsis. A man listed in the credits as the 'Thief' (Thiago Martins) harvests from a certain strain of orchid a worm that produces mind-transforming effects on humans. He force-feeds one to Kris (Amy Seimetz), a woman who works in the film industry (the CGI footage she's seen studying is a remnant of *A Topiary*, the abortive feature that Carruth spent years developing after *Primer*). Subject to the Thief's will, Kris makes her savings over to him, losing her money, her job and her social identity. The worm is removed from her body by the 'Sampler' (Andrew Sensenig), who grafts it into a pig; as well as running a pig farm, he is a recordist and composer, sampling concrete sounds from the environment and sculpting them into synthesised music, exactly as Carruth himself has done in creating the film's score.

Kris, who has no memory of her ordeal, cautiously embarks on a romance with Jeff (played by Carruth, with a softer but no less nervy edge than he showed in his performance in *Primer*), a broker fired for embezzling. A mark on Jeff's ankle suggests that he too has been subject to the Thief's manipulation – as does his briefly glimpsed activity of making paper chains, something we have seen Kris do.

But the lovers are united by more than the collapse of their lives. There's a telepathy or mental merging between them; they seem to share the same childhood memory. And there seems to be another distant connection at work, although this is something we are left to infer from the editing: a link, whether telepathic or more

obscurely associative, between the human couple and a pair of pigs in the Sampler's pen.

The telepathy theme is just one way in which the film, as Carruth has put it, is about "things happening at a distance". Often, events happen in two places simultaneously – as when a surprise cut transports the lovers' bed into the pig pen, or when Kris confronts the Sampler simultaneously on his farm and in an empty office. Simultaneity was also a key device in *Primer*, in which time loops, engendering doppelgängers, enabled characters to be literally in two places at once.

GOING UPRIVER

The film's final third is ostensibly the most difficult, eschewing dialogue to communicate instead through recurring and juxtaposed images and sounds. Yet by the time we reach this point, we should ideally have absorbed the principles of Carruth's film language, which gets into our system just as the worm works its way under Kris's skin and its mysterious blue discharge floods her bloodstream. *Upstream Color*'s denouement sees Kris and Jeff pursuing the mystery to its source, in a way that Carruth, in US interviews, has compared to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "This is going upriver to solve the problem in some way... So that's the way I sort of thought of it: we are now beyond plot or questions, we are simply watching it play out."

This telling comment recalls a line in *Primer*, describing the mechanism that the two scientists have discovered: "It's growing at its own momentum – it's like a feedback loop, it just regulates itself." This seems a perfect metaphor for Carruth's cinema, which also reaches a point of elaboration at which we're simply watching it 'play out'. You might say that Carruth likes to set up systems that begin to develop autonomously – and potentially uncontrollably, fuelled by their own dynamism. Then, it seems, the question is how much Carruth – and the viewer – gets to master these systems, as opposed to them just 'playing out'.

Upstream Color works its spell on us in some ways that we may feel impelled to analyse, and also in other ways that we may never consciously 'get'. Just as the Sampler draw worms out of the ground by attracting them with a deep sonic rumble, just as the Thief controls Kris through surreptitious invasion, so *Upstream Color* affects us in ways we can't easily explain. We're really talking about something like the effect of music – and indeed, Carruth has talked in interviews about hoping people would watch the film repeatedly as they might listen to a favourite album.

What's certain is that both Carruth's films are very deliberately composed. "I'm an obsessive," he tells me. "I stay at home and I have huge diagrams of how the plot is meant to work – but that doesn't start until I have a compelling enough exploration that I know I want to start playing with. It really does feel like it's a million-piece puzzle and I just drop all the million pieces on the floor and find a way to screw them together."

It seems that nothing in the composition of *Upstream Color* is left to chance, as witness Carruth's very hands-on approach; this time, he's additionally photographing the film himself. Now, one might think *Upstream Color* was one of those films that don't find their structure until the editing stage. Just look at its fragmentation, its intersect-

ing visual rhymes, its fugues of extreme close-ups (Kris's body is often segmented into shots of hands, feet, elbows, skin surfaces, dismantling the character into the sum of her physical organisms). Surely it's only in the cut that these patterns can emerge?

Not at all, insists Carruth. "That couldn't work unless we shot everything and then decided it in editing. But we don't do that – we shoot exactly what we need. It's all storyboarded in advance, and scripted before that." With the bodily close-ups, he says, "At the very least, we'll know that we're fascinated with the details, with the narrow depth of field and skin textures and the tactility of surfaces. But more times than not, we'll know the specific shot."

SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURES

Even so, Carruth's systematic procedures are open to the influence of different factors entering the game. One is the fact that co-editor David Lowery, director of this year's Sundance hit *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*, came on board at a crucial point, when Carruth was working so hard that he was sleeping only 90 minutes a night (you're reminded of the overstretched, project-drunk heroes of *Primer*). Then there's the way that Amy Seimetz (also the writer-director of last year's *Sun Don't Shine*) contributes a potent affective pull with her performance as the vulnerable, guarded, sometimes opaque yet, all in all, emotionally hyper-charged Kris.

Seimetz significantly changed the equilibrium of the system, Carruth says: "She's just so smart about the way that she's performing, it meant we could step off the gas on some of the other elements. It's hard to pinpoint exactly how that works, though. Until you have all the elements together, you don't know how they're all going to work together. You're always balancing things."

"But everything affects everything – the cinematography changed the music a lot. When Kris is being deformed, Amy's performance was so much everything it needed to be – horrified and deeply hurt and emotional, all of that – that I didn't have to convey those things with any of the other elements. The music only plays transcendent at that moment, because she's playing horrified and harmed. Of the three things that have to be conveyed in that scene, she's already got two of them, so the music only has to do the other one."

Carruth's methodology and imagination may be systematic, but they allow for fluidity. A key theme of *Upstream Color*, as the title suggests, is flow, transfer – of water, electricity, sound. It's conveyed sonically in the extraordinary sequence in which sounds made and heard by Kris and Jeff (a photocopier, a bathroom tap, stones in a corrugated iron pipe) merge into ones recorded by the Sampler, which he then turns into music that feeds back into the couple's world.

You might see telepathy – one of the film's manifestations of flow – as a metaphor for the connections we as viewers create between different narrative elements when we construct meaning from them. In an early encounter, Kris – working in a printing store – tells Jeff that one of the products she offers is signage. "I don't need signage," Jeff replies; but signage, a map to his and Kris's gap-riddled histories, is something the couple desperately need. Carruth's two films are forests of signs – but without much navigational signage to tell us what elements are more meaningful than others. Hence the interpre-

tative fever that grips you watching these films, as you find yourself reading pretty much any element in them as allegorical of the making of the work itself: in *Primer*, the boxes that generate the story; in *Upstream Color* the paper chains, the farm, the medical process, the Sampler and the Thief as hidden 'authors' of the narrative... (You wonder also whether the narrative of *Upstream Color* is, on some hidden level, generated by fragments of *Walden*, the text Kris memorises and recites by heart – which, as we hear, contains such giveaway phrases as "a sullen rush and roar".)

It's worth noting, however, that Carruth approaches his storytelling experiments neither as a narrative theorist in the literary sense (he never reads fiction, he says), nor as a cinephile: in conversation, he avoids naming particular films that interest him, and claims never to have heard of Alain Resnais.

Rather, he seems to take a genuinely scientific, procedure-focused approach to story, the world and its mysteries. His next film *The Modern Ocean* again involves complex systems that he has invented for himself. "Part of the film has to do with insurance, indemnity, financing, bank accounts, shipping routes," he explains. "Today financing is mainly to do with people sitting at computers. I don't want that, so I constructed this fake form of financing that has to do with boxes full of documents – they're travelled around a trading floor, basically. I'm setting up these things so that we can physically watch. Once we've learned how this thing works, later on in the story we will understand when 11 different people are carrying 11 different boxes over from that station to this one, we will know who is routing money where and why. And it basically starts with an aversion to somebody going..." – Carruth mimes tapping a keyboard – "I don't want that, that's not interesting."

There's a droll anecdote told in *Primer*. NASA, the story goes, set up a programme to develop a pen that would work in zero gravity; the Russians, meanwhile, solved the problem by equipping their cosmonauts with pencils. This too seems to sum up Carruth's cinema: conditions of unimaginable complexity, and solutions of startling simplicity and economy. Carruth's films are at once the challenge of writing in deep space, and the Russian pencil.



Upstream Color is released in the UK on 30 August and is reviewed on page 86

PIG IN THE MIDDLE
With a plot in which pigs, top left, may hold the key to the mysterious worm impregnation of Kris and Jeff, below left, *Upstream Color* is every bit as mind-boggling as Carruth's cult debut *Primer*, below



ARTISTS' FILM & VIDEO

FLICKERINGS ON THE LIDO

The proliferation of artists' film and video at the Venice Biennale points up differences between the screen in the gallery and in the cinema

By Craig Burnett

At the start of the *Simpsons* episode 'The Secret War of Lisa Simpson', Lisa sits in a dark classroom while a film about sand flickers to a halt. As the teacher wearily changes the reel, Lisa pipes up: "Movies are a nice break but couldn't we be doing something a little more challenging?" "Probably," drawls the teacher, before starting a hilariously out-of-date flick ("Will man ever walk on her fertile surface?" asks the narrator) about lunar colonisation.

Lisa's plight came to mind as I watched Camille Henrot's Silver Lion award-winning *Grosse fatigue* in one of the many dark rooms in the Arsenale devoted to video at this year's Venice Biennale. A take on 'The Encyclopaedic Palace', curator

Massimiliano Gioni's theme for the sprawling occasion, the video takes as its subject all human knowledge, expressed through rapid edits, a voiceover that raps its way through ancient myths ("in the beginning there was a black egg" etc) and a funky soundtrack. It's all overlapping computer windows and shifting fragments, some found, some shot by the artist. You watch a bearded scientist from the Smithsonian Institution examining drawers of preserved toucans, a shot of the Rosetta Stone, a crow eating a dead bird, a monkey astronaut, a world map showing incidence of bipolar disorder, a bright green frog sitting comfortably atop an iPhone. Henrot's fitting it all into her digital wunderkammer through metonymy and montage.

Nothing could offer a starker contrast than the Austrian pavilion, home to Mathias Poledna's Disney-infused animated short *Imitation of Life*. Poledna, a Los Angeles-based Austrian, reclaimed old-school, hand-drawn animation techniques to create a 35mm film that is a goofy hybrid of a music video and, when a family of quails pops

out of the undergrowth, *Bambi*. The film starts with a bird fluttering down from a blue sky into an evergreen forest – a bit of Austria? – to alight on a branch beside a snoozing donkey in a sailor's suit. "Hello. How did you get here?" he asks, not unreasonably. In response, the floppy-eared fellow gets up and starts a song-and-dance routine while floating down a river on a log before hopping into a meadow to tap dance. The song is a superbly sardonic number by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown (the duo behind 'Singin' in the Rain') and I was sure Poledna had adapted an old recording for the soundtrack. But no, he recorded it anew in Warner Brothers' LA studio. The film ends with the donkey walking away singing "fooling with me" while you wonder

If art and cinema make neurotic bedfellows, they've never been able to keep their hands off each other



Channelling ghosts: Ed Atkins's *The Trick Brain* grows out of a DVD-ROM produced to accompany the auction of the contents of André Breton's apartment

PHOTO BY FRANCESCO GALLI/COURTESY BY LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

whether he isn't speaking for the audience.

I loved the quixotic foolhardiness of the film, its perverse archaeology. I'd gladly watch *Imitation of Life* again and again. But who's the audience for a work so bombastically anachronistic? It looks like cinema, but it doesn't belong in one. In Venice, the work was shown with some of the drawings that constituted the movie, an archive of the labour-intensive process but also discrete art objects in themselves. Poledna has commercial galleries that show his work and support his projects but I suspect this project is too big, too expensive to be profitable. A vast team and enormous production costs went into *Imitation of Life* and the work might not have been made if it weren't for the Venice Biennale: it's an artwork for international shows that pull in big audiences, a project supported by an Austrian Federal Ministry. When the donkey sings, "I got a feeling it's make believe," Poledna seems to wink at the audience, acknowledging his amazement that he could make an artwork as wildly playful as this.

Poledna might envy the relative indolence of Ed Atkins's *The Trick Brain*, not far from Henrot's work in the Arsenale. When the entire contents of André Breton's apartment was auctioned off in 2003, a DVD-ROM was published to document the occasion, and it clearly inspired Atkins. He added a script to accompany the slow, lingering shots of artwork by Picabia and Dalí, among countless others, alongside artefacts such as Native American masks. The narration seems to channel the ghostly voice of the room – "scintillas of nothing that riddle every lungful of foetid air at every single point in the breathable universe" – as if it were mourning its own dispersal. Atkins takes a brute fact of commerce and glosses it with an outrageous fiction, yet also records the passing of a time when an artwork was a handmade object.

One of the better pieces at the 2011 Venice Biennale was Omer Fast's *5000 Feet Is the Best* (2011). A 30-minute looped video about an operator who controlled drone bombers over Afghanistan and Pakistan, the video is a transfixing blend of documentary and drama. I saw the work at the Biennale, amid the distractions of a huge group show. Complex film, terrible setting to take it all in. How does Fast's artwork differ from a short movie? Shouldn't we watch it in some kind of cinema? Yet only the engine of the art world would support such an odd hybrid. Compare Fast's work to one of 2013's standout – for me – works, Melvin Moti's *Eigenlicht* (2012). It's a 35mm film of colourful stones that glow like magic crystals in a black background, the forms floating tantalisingly in and out of the frame. Is this a microscopic view or a cosmic one? There was no narrative, and nothing to learn: just the pleasure of looking at mute and mysterious objects.

If art and cinema make neurotic bedfellows, they've never been able to keep their hands off each other. Bruce Nauman and John Baldessari, among many others (not least Warhol), were keen experimenters almost half a century ago. Yet something different is afoot today. These guys had almost no money. Where Nauman made a slow-motion film of himself flicking his own testicles (*Bouncing Balls*, 1969) and Baldessari made *Title* (1973), a film in which the artist announces,



Something for everyone: Camille Henrot's *Grosse fatigue*

"I'm going to tell you a story and this story is true," before analytically breaking down the components of a typical Hollywood narrative, artists are now becoming big-budget directors. Following the 80s boom, Julian Schnabel led the way with *Basquiat* and *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, Steve McQueen (who represented Britain with a short film in 2009 and had a decade-old slide installation in this year's Biennale) is about to release *12 Years a Slave*, his third film, while Sam Taylor-Johnson (who won an award for Most Promising Young Artist at the 1997 Biennale) was recently announced as the director of an upcoming adaptation of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Now Omer Fast, it turns out, is working on an adaptation of the Tom McCarthy novel *Remainder*. Artists are stepping out of the arthouse and into the mainstream. And why not? Surely the trend reflects an urge to move away from the world of sellable objects depicted in Atkins's *The Trick Brain* so that they can tell stories to larger audiences.

On the other hand, what I liked about the work of Atkins and Moti is that their films neither unloaded a pile of facts on the viewer's lap nor tried to tell a story, but offered an experience that held the viewer's attention and generated a wide range of thoughts. Watching these works was akin to looking at an object: it offered the viewer that kind of freedom and pleasure. Both made completely different demands to those of, say, Fast's *5000*

Feet Is the Best. The more idiosyncratic a film or video work, the further it moves away from cinema or news, the more Lisa Simpson might praise it as "challenging". While *5000 Feet Is the Best* is a cogent piece of political and analytic storytelling, and I'm grateful for an art world that will support this kind of work, it still seemed out of place in a big group show, where I'd rather see more bouncing balls and glowing stones. Leave narrative to the cinema.

But maybe it's almost impossible to divide art from cinema; they overlap in unpredictable, often fruitful ways. Soon after getting back from Venice, I went to an event at the Ritzy cinema, in London, where John Pilger hosted a post-screening conversation with Joshua Oppenheimer, the director of *The Act of Killing*. As they started to talk, Pilger repeatedly praised the film's "originality", which struck me as his fact-loving journalist's way of condemning it. He added that anyone who had seen the film would have no way of knowing anything about the Indonesian Killings of 1965-66. The mood grew a bit tense, but Oppenheimer calmly defended his work. Whatever you want to say about Pilger as a journalist, his approach to *The Act of Killing* was ploddingly wrongheaded. Where he wanted facts, I wanted to applaud the film's idiosyncrasies, its unanswered questions.

There's a telling episode in *The Act of Killing* when the main subject, an ageing murderer called Anwar Congo, re-enacts and films his acts of brutality with a group of fellow thugs. When one of them offers an anecdote for the film, adding that it's "true", Congo retorts, "Everything in this film should be true." Pilger might agree, but demanding truth in representation is the dim-eyed dream of a psychopath. What is *The Act of Killing*? A documentary, sure, but also something far odder, often bringing to mind an essay like Atkins's or a dream like Moti's, at times more experimental video than fact-based report. It refuses to be a film for the classroom. Who wants truth in art? It soon grows stale. Artists should approach their work with the aim of making everything wildly beyond the grip of truth. ☹



Mathias Poledna's *Imitation of Life*

KEEP ON ROLLING

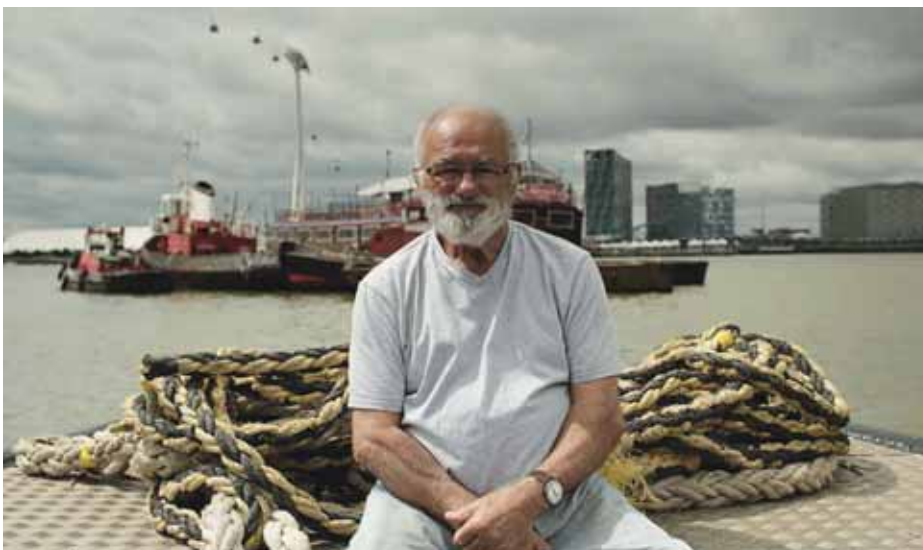
The Thames has inspired less than its share of notable filmmaking but a current exhibition showcases a raft of stimulating new work

By Sukhdev Sandhu

Almost everyone has heard of the Thames. Painters and poets such as Turner and T.S. Eliot have created great art around it. And yet, in spite of occasional outliers – John Mackenzie's prophetic thriller about Docklands-era neoliberalism *The Long Good Friday* (1980), William Raban's meditative and archivally rich *Thames Film* (1987), Patrick Wright's characteristically incisive television series *The River* (1999) – it has inspired strikingly little moving-image work of note. For the most part, it functions as a toothless retread of a Canaletto panorama, a picturesque backdrop to romcom sequences in which courting couples amble along the South Bank, a digi-graphic set of trad signifiers in tourist-board advertisements.

'Estuary', a new exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands, offers a counter-compendium that includes Raban's film, John Smith's *Horizon* (*Five Pounds a Belgian*) and Andrew Kötting's short *Jaunt*. Perhaps its centrepiece is *Portrait of a River*, a full-length work commissioned by the Museum of London and Film and Video Umbrella and directed by Danish-born London resident Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen. Like the other work in the show, it doesn't focus on iconic sites such as Tower Bridge or Waterloo Bridge so much as on the less conventionally photogenic realm of mudflats and salt marshes, oil tankers and roll-on/roll-off ferries. If the Thames itself is more commonly invoked than used – few Londoners sail on it to get to work – this part of it, winding through Essex all the way to the North Sea, a terrain for labour and industrial architecture rather than pleasureboats and gentle cruises, is especially foreign.

Larsen's film is divided into discrete sections that exacerbate this sense of strangeness. Most non-fiction depictions of the Thames – and riparian spaces more generally – proceed upriver or downriver, in linear fashion, in thrall to a barely examined notion of organic aesthetics that tends to treat nature as deterministic and inevitable. At the Docklands show, however, the running order of the individual segments is decided at random by a computer. This aleatory approach, not so far removed from



Old man river: *Portrait of a River*, part of 'Estuary' at Museum of London Docklands

the juxtapositions and chance encounters common on music-video cable channels or on YouTube, reformats the Thames into a river of fragments and chunklets. It prevents the viewer from falling into estuarine reverie; the challenge becomes to look for visual motifs or social concepts that cross-echo and resonate across apparently disparate water worlds.

Some of the most striking segments involve locations that are rendered otherworldly, almost abstract. In the Outer Estuary region, atop grey choppy waves that recall the protracted final sequence of Chantal Akerman's *News from Home*, stands a wind turbine farm; the turbine arms move round mechanically like those of a disaffected aerobics instructor. Near Southend-on-Sea, colourful shapes drift and drag; they're kitesurfers who, in wide shot, resemble the ludic kinetics of avant-garde typography or dreamy sub-aquatic creatures in a Jean Painlevé film. A comic dimension emerges at Allhallows on the Hoo peninsula where, against a backdrop of platforms and flatlands, an amateur golfer tees off before casually walking out of the frame.

These segments rub up against ones more closely associated with oral history or socially marinated documentary of the kind with which Larsen has established his reputation. (343 *Perspectives* explores the meaning of community from the point of view of South Londoners living in neighbourhoods served only by the 343 bus;

The familiar, perhaps overdocumented river can come to seem strange, fertile, full of imaginative possibilities

Portrait in Time gives voice to residents of Chatham still struggling to cope with the closure of local dockyards 20 years earlier.) The work of a group dealing with seamen in distress is described, while the captain of an excursion vessel who has worked on the Thames for many decades laments the decline in the number of lighters – down from 6,500 in 1959 to a mere 62 in the present day.

For a moment, this incantation of loss – the Thames as a ghost river – suggests that Larsen's film might contribute to that body of work (strange television-film essays such as Chris Petit's *Weather* and Mark Harrison's slavery-informed *Sweet Thames, Another Water*; Roni Horn's photography book about the suicidal Thames; even Anja Kirschner and David Panos's apocalyptic *Polly II: Plan for a Revolution in Docklands*) in which the river is portrayed in terms of conflict, drowning and disaster as much as rebirth or liquid pastoralism. But that's counterposed by vignettes of boat-building courses for school drop-outs in Deptford.

For all its success at capturing the grey horizontals and dread skylines of the remoter fringes of the Thames, Larsen's most significant achievement might be in translating the currently fashionable concept of 'edgelands' – that mysterious, semi-wild, neither urban-nor-rural interzone of obsolete factories and sewage-treatment centres that has also been the subject of John Rogers's *The London Perambulator* and Kieran Evans's excellent collaboration with Underworld's Karl Hyde, *The Outer Edges* – into hydro-poetic terrain. He makes a familiar and perhaps overdocumented river seem strange, fertile, full of imaginative possibilities. 

i 'Estuary' is at the Museum of London Docklands until 27 October. *Portrait of a River* also screens in the Thames Festival, 13 to 15 September



Portrait of a River



The Thames viewed from the Shard

MELTING WITH THE WORLD

Drawing on Shakespeare may help the wry chamber pieces of Argentina's Matias Piñeiro reach wider audiences

By Steven Erickson

Argentina is often described as the most European of Latin American countries. The work of 31-year-old director Matias Piñeiro – which draws on the influence of Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette – bears that out. Yet, at the same time, it is so distinctly Argentine that one can see why *Viola* (2012), his riff on Shakespeare, is his only film to have received much international distribution.

The characters of his first two films, *The Stolen Man* (*El hombre robado*, 2007) and *They All Lie* (*Todos mienten*, 2009), are obsessed with the 19th-century Argentine politician and writer Domingo Faustina Sarmiento: *The Stolen Man*'s opening scene shows a student being interviewed for a job at the Sarmiento Museum; *They All Lie* quotes Sarmiento in its third line of dialogue, then launches into a lengthy excerpt from his journal. It's hard to imagine any Hollywood film about hip college students clinging to a 19th-century figure.

The milieu of Piñeiro's first two films evokes the student-poet bohemia of Roberto Bolaño's novel *The Savage Detectives*. *The Stolen Man* is less polished: shot in grainy 16mm black and white, this lackadaisical tale is about a ring of thieves who haunt a university and a museum, but their crimes have no more weight than the theatre and music rehearsals Piñeiro depicts.

Made with similarly modest means, *They All Lie* shows what can be accomplished with a house and a few actors. Young people hang out in the country, playing the guitar and odd games. One is a forger of paintings. The jolly mood rubs against an atmosphere of mistrust, all captured by a constantly gliding camera. The film's segments are separated by intertitles, some referring to film or play titles ("F for truth" is one). The gamesmanship recalls Rivette's *Out 1*, although less seems to be at stake. The characters like to be in the presence of art, yet they have difficulty actually finishing their own work.

In New York recently, Piñeiro told me that only after *Viola* was finished did he realise that the Shakespeare connection might help it find an audience outside Argentina. *Viola* evokes an even greater number of moods than his first two films but Piñeiro's usual bright cinematography and intermingling of theatre and life are still present. The film could be split into two halves. The first consists mostly of rehearsals for Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*; the second depicts Viola (Maria Villar) as a woman who runs a business with her boyfriend selling pirated music CDs.

These two threads come together in charming fashion. Sabrina (Elisa Carriajo) has decided to break up with Agustin (Alessio Rigo de Righi); Cecilia (Agustina Muñoz), who has worked with him as an actor, tries to change her mind. Cecilia and Viola's paths cross when Agustin keeps sending Cecilia CDs purchased from Viola. More than in Piñeiro's other films, men seem disposable here; boyfriends are constantly discussed but rarely seen. Always a constant in Piñeiro's work,



The food of love: Piñeiro's third feature *Viola* continues his interest in Shakespeare's female characters

female bonding reaches new heights in *Viola*.

Are Piñeiro's bohemia drawn from experience? "My films are not realistic or naturalistic," he says. "They're awkward, and I like that. You cannot do sociology with them. They are constructions. I do share a time and place with these people. We belong to the middle class. We're trying to work things out through art. We even live in a bubble. But I'm not trying to say 'This is how young people in Argentina are today.'"

Still, events in his films have uncanny resemblances to real life. A series of robberies did take place in Buenos Aires a few months after he completed *The Stolen Man*. "In the end, [my films] melt with the world and come back to it. My characters use written expressions, not spoken expressions, and I write them in a way that sounds very weird and stylised. It's like a text that a tour guide memorises."

In an article in *Cinema Scope*, Argentine critic Quintín sees Piñeiro's films as a sideways dig at "the populist government of the Kirchners, who were already in office when Piñeiro started film school". Piñeiro himself disagrees. "I don't intend that kind of reading. I make films that are completed by the spectator. They can take you some place where you want to go. They need your help to finish them. If you're thinking about politics, you will see politics. If you had a break-up with your boyfriend, you will see it in another way."

Piñeiro's approach to Sarmiento is an unusual one. "He developed Argentina's educational system and brought ideas from elsewhere to develop this empty land. I found him to be profoundly literary. He was very influenced by Balzac and Flaubert. It's pretty impressive

My films are not realistic. I share a time and place with my characters but I'm not saying this is how Argentina is today

that someone who was far away from the city could work his way into culture – often in a savage, impulsive way. He was a very cultured figure but at the same time, he was a maniac. The idea of these girls reading him and being influenced by their reading and taking him into their sentimental lives interested me. Sarmiento mixes things that shouldn't be mixed."

Piñeiro's films were produced in conjunction with the Universidad de Cine, where he studied film. They've all been made for tiny budgets: *Viola* was reportedly produced for \$40,000. The director is not interested in "selling Latin America to the world", as films like *City of God* have been accused of doing. Instead, *Viola* is closer to Manny Farber's concept of "termite art".

The director emphasises his desire to work regularly. "Films need money but I don't think they need so much money. I always need a bit more than I have. I'd rather focus on creating a narrative and working with actors. I don't want to spend so much time on the kind of film I can only make every five years. I'm not really interested in making a big film. I don't want to be like Bresson and Dreyer, who took a long time between each film. I'm more interested in working daily."

Piñeiro's use of Shakespeare began in 2010 with the 40-minute *Rosalinda* and will continue with his next film *The Princess of France*, about the production of a radio play based on *Love's Labours Lost*. "I first read Shakespeare when I was making one of my earlier films and I found the great character of Rosalinda for Maria Villar. I sensed that she could do something with her. I realised that I could build a series of Shakespeare-related films with female roles.

"After making *Viola*, the response was positive," he continues. "Audiences told me they could relate much more because even in Argentina, people were afraid of the Sarmiento references." With *Viola*, Piñeiro has made a film of broad reach without compromising himself. Let's hope he can retain that attention when he stops rewriting Shakespeare. ☺

MUSIC FROM BEYOND

Often dismissed even by their composers, 1960s horror scores in fact constituted a rare mainstream showcase for musical modernism

By Frances Morgan

In Elisabeth Lutyens's memoir *A Goldfish Bowl* (published in 1972), few of the films she soundtracked for Hammer and its competitor Amicus during the 1960s are mentioned by name. The prolific film-music composer instead sums up this body of work as "features of the horror variety" – unsurprising, perhaps, given that her scores for film and radio number in the hundreds and were written, as she puts it, "with the presumption that [they] will be heard only once",

The idea that any piece of music or film will be heard or seen only once is, in this time of massively accelerated cultural output and availability, both still resonant (is there time to hear anything more than once?) and increasingly alien. The half-life of ephemera has increased. Careful archiving of bodies like the BFI keeps in circulation public-information broadcasts like those of British Transport Films, some of which in fact feature Lutyens's music, while the more anarchic archives of YouTube ensure that most B movies remain resolutely undead. Artists' more commercial or institutional work takes on a value that those who produced it rarely anticipated, not just aesthetic but also social and historical. The ongoing fascination with the music produced by the composers of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop is a case in point, the ident and theme tunes produced to order by composers such as Delia Derbyshire now emblematic of a golden age of English popular modernism, where radical electronic music crept under the critical radar and into living-rooms.

The horror or suspense film as a vehicle



Spine tingling: rhythm and unusual instrumentation marked the music of films like *The Skull*

for challenging music is another trope that, while rather too easily used as a marketing device for soundtrack reissues, is borne out by well-known examples such as Bernard Herrmann's dissonant Hitchcock scores or Kubrick's repurposing of Penderecki for *The Shining*. The films churned out by Hammer and Amicus Productions are less often viewed as a showcase for musical modernism, although David Huckvale's 2008 book *Hammer Film Scores and the Musical Avant-Garde* makes a case for why they might be. It's here that you find analyses of the film music Elisabeth Lutyens dismisses in her autobiography, with studies of the soundtracks of *Paranoid* (1962), *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* (1964) and *The Skull* (1965)

that point out the debt they owe to Lutyens's embracing, as a young composer, of the music of Debussy, Milhaud, Schoenberg and Webern.

Huckvale rightly singles out *The Skull* for attention. It's a typically lurid tale, based on a Robert Bloch story, in which an antique skull said to be that of the Marquis de Sade induces homicidal mania in everyone who owns it, including an occult historian played by Peter Cushing. At the film's nightmarish climax is a long passage without any dialogue in which the music takes centre stage and you're able to fully appreciate its dark, energetic narrative momentum. Huckvale writes of the score's "anti-Romantic" qualities: a lack of big themes; rhythm and timbre taking on as much importance as



Elisabeth Lutyens

The first woman in the UK to score a film, Lutyens frequently worked for Hammer as well as collaborating with Paolozzi



Serialist killers: Lutyens's reputation as an avant-gardist contrasted with her lurid film assignments

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA



Trivial details of daily life and cute cats – YouTube and the first home movies have more in common than we think

By Edward Anderson

The tides of digital video inanity, hilarity and tragedy that daily swamp YouTube's 'Most Popular' list are heirs to some longstanding and underappreciated traditions of one of cinema's earliest inventions: the home movie. Uploaded at a rate of 100 hours per minute, the gigabytes of bouncing kittens, smiling babies, parties, holidays and all manner of mundane and extraordinary domestic happenings constitute surprisingly faithful iterations of standard-issue home-movie subjects. Masses-produced video is a cultural practice inspired and tempered by access to technology, and its roots wind deep into the Victorian era.

The tropes of amateur photography pre-date cinema by about a decade, arising during the period when still photography was fast becoming an affordable pastime for the middle class. The first Kodak camera, issued in 1888, was clearly intended to cultivate hobbyist photography: the brochure alluringly promised that a "picturesque diary of your trip to Europe, to the mountains or the sea-shore may be obtained without trouble with a KODAK CAMERA" and was wistfully decorated with sketches of a child posing for a photograph, a fishing trip and a trio of playing cats.

Come 1895, as the first cinematographic technologies emerged, there was already an established amateur photography scene with its own clubs and journal, *Amateur Photographer*. Three years later, the first home-movie camera was launched. Its inventor, Birt Acres – the first man to make a moving picture in Britain – had grand ambitions for its take-up. In the instruction manual for his Birtac camera-printer-projector, he wrote: "The object in introducing this apparatus is to endeavor to popularize this extremely fascinating branch of photography... [I have] always looked forward to the time when animated photography would be within the reach of every one."

The Birtac camera pioneered a number of innovations that were to become mainstays of future home-movie cameras. Acres designed the camera around a custom 17.5mm film gauge – made by splitting 35mm stock down the middle – and calibrated the aperture to shoot quarter-sized pictures, saving 75 per cent on the cost of producing film for the device. As a consequence, the camera was smaller and more portable than tripod-mounted professional machines. Its slimmer, lighter film was distributed in daylight loading spools – another Acres innovation – enabling the user to load and unload the camera away from the darkroom.

The camera kit could be purchased with a complete home-developing set-up – pyro, bromide, sodium sulphite and all. If the

Home-movies' longevity is especially precarious; survivals from before WWI are rare



Beach life: a 1903 home movie

home user were as competent at chemistry as composition, the Birtac kit could handle all aspects of developing, fixing, drying and printing; then, with the device coupled up to a set of bellows and a supply of town gas, the recorded images could be projected at home.

Although unique in its vision and technologically pioneering, the Birtac was a market failure. The machine's price tag of £10 and 10 shillings was just too high (an ordinary labourer's wages in 1898 were roughly £3 a month). Acres's lofty ideals for democratising moviemaking were lampooned in the trade press. "He dreams of a day when every pretty maiden and every love-sick swain, who goes to a picnic, will carry a Birtac for recording such incidents as the sitting down of the lavender-trousered gentleman in the midst of the custard," smirked *The Photogram* – less hardware review than supercilious sneer against trifles being committed to celluloid (and, incidentally, a fair anticipation of the kind of imagery now uploaded to Instagram every minute by today's maidens and swains).

Who did buy a Birtac and what they shot with it will likely remain a mystery, as no films are believed to have survived. Often only ever existing as a single print, home movies' longevity is especially precarious; survivals from before World War I are extremely rare. The earliest home movies preserved in the BFI National Archive are those shot by Alfred Ernest Passmore (1867–1948), a prosperous London printer who made 15 35mm films between 1902 and 1908. Each no longer than a minute, the films are prototypical home movies, documenting some friends' housewarming party, family holidays to the seaside at Bognor Regis or Sandown, and children playing in the garden, blowing bubbles, petting the family cat, playing ball and flying a kite.

Though remarkable enough as snapshots of upper-middle-class Edwardian family life, the films are particularly fascinating for what they reveal about the nature of the cultural practice of home-moviemaking, whose short, fragmentary, family-centric, unedited documentary style appears to have changed little over the subsequent century. With cameras ever more affordable and capable, it's intriguing that new video technology remains focused on the capture and exhibition of daily life and its trivialities – and cats. ☹

melody; small or unconventional groupings of instruments – including the cimbalom, the eerie, dulcimer-like instrument that John Barry was to feature the same year on *The Ipcress File's* soundtrack. The experimental qualities of *The Skull's* soundtrack shouldn't be overstated – it is orchestral horror film music, clearly composed for that purpose – but it has a spare, somewhat skeletal aspect that lightens the film's stodginess and reinforces its contemporary London setting.

Despite her prolific cinematic output, which began with documentaries for the Crown Film Unit, Lutyens is often seen as a footnote in the history of atonal music, rather than in the context of her work for film and other media. Born in 1906, the daughter of architect Edwin Lutyens and an aristocratic, Theosophy-obsessed mother, she was determined to study and make a living through music. Her second husband, conductor Edward Clark, had been responsible for the BBC's series of Contemporary Music Concerts in the 1930s, bringing works by composers including some of the German serialists to London for the first time. Lutyens was entranced by what she heard at one of these, believing Webern to be "a guiding spirit to all future music", and started to use serialist techniques in her own work; an unconventional and, at the time, unpopular direction for an English composer. Despite her privileged background and enviable connections, the story Lutyens tells is one of a series of creative struggles, small successes and, in order to support her husband and four children, hard graft as a music copyist and composer for hire.

Now out of print, *A Goldfish Bowl* is a fascinating account of London's musical landscape before, during and after World War II. It's reminiscent of films like *The Red Shoes* and novels like Rumer Godden's *A Candle for St Jude*, in which a young choreographer struggles to present an avant-garde ballet at a Finchley dance school. It is written, like many autobiographies by non-professional authors, with a keen eye for peripheral information (the price of rent or the finer points of an illness rather than, say, names of films or the details of a particular piece of music) and that engaging lack of self-consciousness peculiar to the English upper classes. Lutyens's associates included Dylan Thomas, Stravinsky, Francis Bacon – she provided the music for a 1963 film about his work – and a host of other literary, artistic and musical names with great stories attached; small wonder her day job doesn't merit much space, though there is an interesting description of how a composer works with a director and editor.

That she was the first woman in the UK to score a feature at all (for 1948 thriller *Penny and the Pownall Case*) is something that Lutyens doesn't mention. The films she does describe with enthusiasm are the ones hardest to find in the archives, such as the short *Kakafon Kakoon* (1965), made by sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi about his Wittgenstein-inspired series of prints *As Is When*. Films like this might have represented more of a chance to match her musical ideas with similarly modernist visuals, rather than trying to align them to Hammer's gothic gore – satisfying though that juxtaposition undoubtedly is to today's viewers. ☹

"Pat Collins has delivered a remarkable first fiction feature...a simple, haunting and poetic vision of Ireland...an absorbing experience."

Michael Hayden, LONDON FILM FESTIVAL



"A surprising and unquiet meditation on man, memory and landscape." Wally Hammond, TIME OUT

A film by Pat Collins

silence

with Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde



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Donald Clarke, IRISH TIMES

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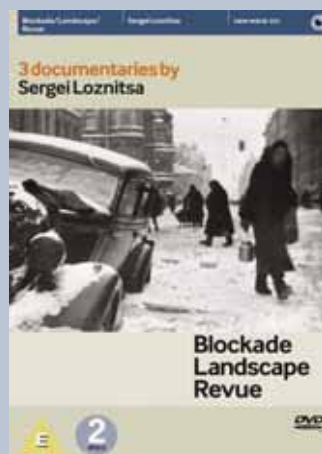
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In the Fog

Sergei Loznitsa's FIPRESCI winner got 5 star reviews for its Tolstoyan depiction of moral dilemmas during the 2nd World War in Belarus. The disc also includes his short film, *Letter*.

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26 August



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These 3 documentaries by Loznitsa are released together for the first time. *Blockade* deals with the siege of Leningrad, *Revue* re-fashions Soviet news-reels, and *Landscape* from 2003 eavesdrops on conversations at a small town Russian bus-stop.

DVD release 23 September



Caesar Must Die

The Taviani Brothers' Berlin Golden Bear winner takes the performance of Julius Caesar by the inmates of a Roman high-security prison to examine the dynamics of power and the relation between art and life to moving effect.

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14 October

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Reviews



77 **Lovelace**

Rivetingly portrayed by Amanda Seyfried, the enigmatic Linda Lovelace rolls up all the pleasures and pitfalls of the sexual revolution into one doe-eyed package. Yet we are not given a single, conflicted Lovelace, but two incompatible versions of her story



62 Films of the month



70 Films



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Girl gang: Claire Mazerolle, Katie Coseni, Madeleine Bisson and Raven Adamson in Laurent Cantet's *Foxfire*

Foxfire

France/Canada/Spain/
United Kingdom/Switzerland 2011
Director: Laurent Cantet
Certificate 15 143m 42s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Joyce Carol Oates's 1993 novel about a girl gang on the rampage in 1950s small-town America has been adapted for the big screen before, in a sensationalist early outing for Angelina Jolie which changed the setting to the modern day and telescoped the action into a feverish catalogue of thrills and spills. Laurent Cantet's new version stays much closer to the source, expanding over 140 minutes of faithful homage and allowing the psychological development of the teenage protagonists to unfold at a leisurely, even glacial, pace. Such respectful treatment has pros and cons: its meandering, episodic structure feels at times baggy and diffuse, and the steadily increasing cast of characters means that the ending packs much less of a punch than the grippingly intimate beginning. But the film has plenty of room to think and breathe, and asks difficult questions about the kind of assumptions we bring to a tale about misbehaving girls.

The set-up is certainly intriguing: Raven Adamson plays Legs, a troubled teenage girl

bristling with political and feminist convictions, who hits town one night like a tornado. First she scoops up the bookish and introverted Maddy, who falls in love with her fearlessness and certainty, and then she draws in all the local misfit girls, including sour, overweight Goldie, serial abuse victim Rita and mischievous beauty VV. At this stage, Legs's charisma resides in her willingness to confront the male establishment – men who hide their violent misogyny behind a mask of respectability. When she publicly humiliates a bullying teacher and orchestrates a violent attack on Maddy's creepy uncle after he tries to sexually assault her, she seems to be following the well-worn filmic formula of girl-empowerment in the face of egregious injustice. The other girls find these escapades exhilarating and enjoy the notoriety caused by the graffiti they leave at the scenes of their crimes. But for Legs there is a serious political structure to her rebellion; she has imbibed communist ideas and is impatient for full-blown revolution. A stint in a correctional facility does nothing to dim her ideological certainty: she returns to town grimmer, more cunning, even more willing to contemplate extreme measures.

Legs's reappearance – shorn of her hair and suddenly much older – is the turning point of the film, and from here the idea that these girls just wanna have fun is examined under a harsher

light. Instead of targeting the guilty, Legs's new policy is that no one is innocent, certainly no man silly enough to flirt with a pretty girl. Shaking down these middle-aged fools is easy money, and money is what the gang discover they need more than jolly japes, now that they've all moved into a rickety rented house to try out Legs's vision of commune living. As the gang gropes toward an adult appreciation of humdrum reality and the need for survival, their ideals – always precarious – start to fall apart. Jealousy, resentment and meanness split the group, racism causes an ugly incident, and Legs's fearlessness



Leader of the pack: Adamson as Legs

becomes frightening in itself, especially when she hatches her last ruthless and dangerous plan.

French director Cantet won a Palme d'Or for his last full-length feature, *The Class* (2008), for which he used extensive workshops to cast non-professional teenage actors and then put them in a naturalistic school setting, fooling some commentators into mistaking the film for a documentary. With its period setting and occasionally stuffy dialogue, there's no risk of such a mistake with *Foxfire*, but Cantet has repeated his trick of casting fresh-faced unknowns, this time scouting schools, community centres and troubled-kid programmes to find his talent. The performances – particularly Adamson's as Legs and Claire Mazerolle's as the iron-clad, unloveable Goldie – rattle with pent-up energy, and the result is a film that looks startling in its refusal of Hollywood norms. Carefully chosen design details – the girls wear thick, graceless jeans and live in cramped homes barely clinging to respectability – create an utterly convincing landscape of stifling hardship cracking open to reveal tantalising glimpses of possibility. But there's something depressing about the inevitability of the downhill slide from idealism to criminality, as if any gesture towards social justice must by definition be transgressive. The very things that make Legs irresistible to the other girls – her unwavering leftist convictions, her casual criminal behaviour and her androgyny – make her so incontrovertibly Other that she is doomed from the start.

In a film that depicts male aggression, rape and violence as casually commonplace aspects of post-war American life, such polarised gender extremes can test an audience's patience, especially when that leaves no one to root for. If she was really living in an all-men-are-rapists dystopia, we ought to be cheering Legs's brand of radical disobedience, but this position is denied us by the film's increasing disenchantment with its protagonist. And this resistance to Legs is possibly the point of the film, though if it is it's made too quietly to hit home amid the clamour of incidental plot points. Running under the major theme of Legs's wayward activism is a minor chord played, with impressive delicacy, by Katie Coseni as Maddy. As the film's narrator she is given a privileged point of view, but as the gang's self-appointed archivist and chronicler she is also outside the action, both fascinated and appalled by what she is putting down on paper. Such mediated narratives always remind the viewer of the possibility of bias, and this element makes the Oates novel more complex in its assertions of authenticity, as layers of rival versions vie for credibility. It's harder for a film to sustain that level of ambiguity; whereas the novel form can contain within it incompatible texts which overlap and coincide, the camera itself tends to vouch for the veracity of what we see at any particular moment, even if, *Rashomon*-style, the same scene is replayed from different viewpoints.

There is no such reinterpretation here: Cantet encloses the film almost entirely in Maddy's point of view, although her older self, narrating in voiceover, fretfully insists on citing the documentary evidence for her version of events, and at one point even ponders the difference between her contemporaneous typescript and her memory of the past. We become more and more aware of ways in which her suppressed feelings for Legs have inserted themselves into the story of the Foxfire gang's rise and fall.

Cantet is an outsider to the story, observing almost anthropologically the behaviour of this remote tribe of 1950s tearaways

Perhaps the increasingly ugly depiction of Legs is a result of Maddy's growing disillusionment rather than a change in the temperament of her friend, but the hinted-at gay subtext is also problematic – there's an uncomfortable sense that the anti-male rationale which informs the politics and justifies the criminality of the gang can be ascribed wholesale to the girls' unacknowledged sexuality. Lesbianism surfaces explicitly only in one key scene, between Legs

and a charitably minded rich girl who is trying to help her, and here it is just another tactical weapon in Legs's bid for power and control over someone more vulnerable than herself.

The transformation of Legs into a bully – her adoption of the kind of macho posturing she purportedly stands against – gives the film a conservative, even reactionary, undertow that makes it hard to warm to, even if this says more about its mid-century American setting than it does about its European director. Like Maddy, Cantet is an outsider to the story, observing almost anthropologically the behaviour of this temporally and geographically remote tribe of 1950s tearaways. Perhaps this accounts for the chill that lingers throughout the film, even during the raucous early episodes – the sense that we are not watching real people at all here, but specimens squirming on a pin. **S**



Travelling sisterhood: the ever-growing Foxfire gang

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Carole Scotta
Caroline Benjo
Simon Arnal
Barbara Letellier
Simone Urdl
Jennifer Weiss
Screenplay
Robin Campillo
Laurent Cantet
Based on the book by
Joyce Carol Oates
**Director of
Photography**
Pierre Milon
Editors
Robin Campillo
Stéphanie Léger
Sophie Reine
Clémence Samson

Production Designer
Frankie Diago
Original Music
Timbre
Sound Mixer
Kelly Wright
Costume Designer
Gersha Phillips

@Haut et Court,
The Film Farm Inc.,
France 2 Cinéma,
Lorette Distribution
**Production
Companies**
Haut et Court and The
Film Farm presents in
association with
Memento Films
International

In co-production with
France 2 Cinéma
With the participation
of France Télévisions
In co-production with
Lorette Distribution
with the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+, Haut
et Court Distribution,
Alliance Films,
France Télévisions
Distribution, Ministère
de la Culture et de
la Communication,
Centre National du
Cinéma et de l'Image
Animée, Golem
Distribution, Artificial
Eye, Filmcoop
Produced with

the participation
of the Northern
Ontario Heritage
Fund, Telefilm
Canada, Ontario
Media Development
Corporation, the
Ontario Film and
Television Tax Credit,
the Canadian Film
and Video Production
Tax Credit

Cast
Raven Adamson
Legs
Katie Coseni
Maddy
Madeleine Bisson

Rita
Claire Mazerolle
Goldie
Paige Moyle
Lana
Rachael Nyhuus
Violet
Lindsay
Rolland-Mills
VV
Alexandria Ferguson
Marsha
Ian Matthews
Mr Buttinger
Ali Liebert
Muriel
Brandon McGibbon
Ab Sadosky
Gary Reineke
Father Theriault

**Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]**

Distributor
Curzon Film World

12,933 ft +0 frames

French theatrical title
*Foxfire Confessions
d'un gang de filles*

Upstate New York, the 1950s. A charismatic and rebellious teenage girl nicknamed Legs arrives in a small town and befriends the bookish Maddy, who narrates the story in flashback from the account she writes at the time. Legs introduces Maddy to communist and feminist ideas, and gradually they attract the school's poorest and most vulnerable girls. One girl, Rita, is being regularly humiliated by a teacher, and Legs orchestrates a revenge plot, painting the teacher's car with a message implying that he is a paedophile. The success of this prank encourages the girls to form a gang, 'Foxfire', with a mission to avenge sexual abuse and injustice. They severely beat Maddy's

paedophile uncle and daub feminist graffiti around the school and the town. But when they steal and crash a car, Legs is sent to a correctional facility.

On her return, Legs rents a dilapidated house and the ever-expanding gang gather there to live as a commune, making money by seducing and robbing middle-aged men. Tensions emerge among the gang, and when Legs suggests kidnapping a local financier, Maddy is unhappy and decides to leave. The kidnapping goes wrong and the gang break up.

In the present day, Maddy bumps into Rita, who shows her a newspaper photograph of Fidel Castro with a woman bearing a close resemblance to Legs.

Looking for Hortense

France 2012

Director: Pascal Bonitzer

Certificate 12A 100m 14s

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

Looking for Hortense is the sixth film directed by the scriptwriter and former *Cahiers du cinéma* critic Pascal Bonitzer. This tale of Parisian intellectuals bears all the hallmarks of classic French auteur cinema: small budget (£5.6 million), location shooting, bittersweet atmosphere, dialogue-based action. At the same time, its droll tone and fine plotting – at once simple and labyrinthine – give the film an edge, perhaps not coincidentally recalling the cinema of Eric Rohmer, about whom Bonitzer wrote an excellent book in 1991. In a minor key, the film also touches on the contemporary social issue of illegal immigration.

Looking for Hortense takes place among Paris's bourgeois-bohemians – or *bobos*, as the French would say. Iva (Kristin Scott Thomas) is a theatre director and Damien (Jean-Pierre Bacri) an academic who teaches Asian culture to business students. Although Damien teaches only one class a week and Iva's theatre clearly isn't mainstream – she is adapting Chekhov – they live in a large and beautiful apartment in central Paris. One clue to their lifestyle is Damien's insufferable father Sébastien (Claude Rich), who is president of the Conseil d'Etat and one of the highest-ranking civil servants in the land. Bonitzer may have chosen this particular institution because access to its magnificent buildings at the Palais-Royal has only recently been granted to filmmakers, but nevertheless it sets the tone for a film in which characters are at leisure to explore personal anxieties divorced from material contingencies. That this will be the main concern of the film is hinted at by Damien, when he says early on that he doesn't "have straightforward relationships with anyone", least of all his father.

Against this background, the plot of *Looking for Hortense*, based on a real-life story according to co-scriptwriter Agnès de Sacy, cleverly mixes oedipal drama with social concern. Iva wants Damien to ask his father's help in saving an illegal immigrant called Zorica from being deported. The drama and the comedy of the film coalesce in his inability to do so: he, who as a lecturer masters language, is tongue-tied in front of his pedantic and contemptuous father. The latter's superiority is visualised in the grand offices of the Conseil d'Etat, all marble floors, wood panels and frescoes, where, symbolically, Damien is made to go through security gates to see his own father (later on, equally symbolically, he refuses to do so). Most memorable and funniest is another failed encounter between the two, set in a Japanese restaurant, where Sébastien casually informs his son that he has been bisexual all his life. This painful and, for its generation typically non-communicative, father-son relationship is offset by Damien's running conversations with his adolescent son Noé (Marin Tourrés). While conflictual in an everyday kind of way, their rapport is marked by affection and exchange, and the film accurately conveys the greater part taken by fathers in their children's emotional lives in contemporary society.

The film is less incisive when it ventures out into wider social issues. The patriarchs in positions of authority – Sébastien and the briefly glimpsed powerful judge Henri Hortense (the



Foreign affairs: Isabelle Carré ('Aurore'/'Zorica') and Jean-Pierre Bacri (Damien) in *Looking for Hortense*

surprise title figure) – are shown to be cynical and manipulative, but the critique is muted. So is the exploration of the plight of the *sans papiers* – illegal immigrants seeking official status. By focusing on a white immigrant from the Balkans, *Looking for Hortense* avoids the potentially tricky political issues that would attach to a black and/or Muslim character. Bonitzer has justified this choice by claiming that he wanted to highlight

the fate of 'invisible' immigrants. Perhaps, but the fact that Zorica was brought up in France, can pass for French as 'Aurore', and is conveniently a good-looking blonde, means that she can be played by the well-known French actress Isabelle Carré and become part of the film's romantic plot. On this level, *Looking for Hortense* displays typically French gender politics. At first sight, there is a balance in the central couple's breakdown: Iva has an affair



Arthur Igual and Kristin Scott Thomas



Jackie Berroyer as Damien's friend Lobatch



its superb cast. While Carré as usual is excellent, as is Scott Thomas in a fairly unsympathetic and disappointingly brief role, the male actors take the limelight. Claude Rich does a wonderfully camp turn as Sébastien, and Marin Orcand Tourrés is an extremely plausible Noé, but the film belongs to Jean-Pierre Bacri as Damien. Bacri is known outside France principally for his roles in the films he has co-scripted with Agnès Jaoui, in particular *Un air de famille* (*Family Resemblances*, 1996), *Le Goût des autres* (*The Taste of Others*, 2000) and *Comme une image* (*Look at Me*, 2004). In these, as in many others, he excels as a grumpy middle-aged man. The strength of *Looking for Hortense* is that it harnesses this basically comic persona to an emotionally affecting register, making him simultaneously funny and fragile and thus sympathetic. His apparently macho masculinity, underlined by a modish four-day beard, is mollified by shyness and the inability to express himself with words in the face of his father or 'Aurore'/Zorica (though significantly not Iva, whom he succinctly dismisses).

Like its main character, *Looking for Hortense* is comic and melancholy, fluent and awkward, at once depressed and witty (in-jokes include a cameo by filmmaker Benoît Jacquot as one of Damien's friends and the casting of Bonitzer's daughter Agathe as the 'bad actress' in Iva's play). This places the film within a familiar cinematic territory inherited from the New Wave. But perhaps the formula is wearing thin. In France, *Looking for Hortense* garnered some positive reviews, and with audiences totalling half a million was a modest success. Yet *Cahiers du cinéma*, Bonitzer's former alma mater, disliked the film, criticising its narrow worldview, as did *Positif*. Perhaps a wind of change is blowing through French cinephile circles. It remains to be seen whether the film's wit, charm and Parisian chic win over audiences abroad. 📺

Like its main character, 'Looking for Hortense' is comic and melancholy, fluent and awkward, at once depressed and witty

with actor Antoine (Arthur Igual); Damien falls for 'Aurore'/Zorica. But contrary to what we know generally happens in real life, Damien carries out most of the childcare and Noé stays with his father when they separate, thus implicitly casting Iva as an uncaring mother – something that's anticipated by her chainsmoking, despite Noé's pleas for her to stop, and her repeated late returns home after rehearsals. Moreover, the fate of Iva and Antoine remains off screen and Scott Thomas disappears about halfway through, leaving the film free to concentrate on Damien and the happy resolution with 'Aurore'/Zorica. Rather implausibly, the latter, before choosing Damien, was about to go off with his suicidal friend Lobatch (Jackie Berroyer). Thus, as in Isabelle Mergault's *Je vous trouve très beau* (2005), older Frenchmen find solace with younger, beautiful immigrant women from Eastern Europe. While such things undoubtedly happen, the films gloss over the power imbalance of such relationships.

Looking for Hortense on the whole manages to make its ideological scenario acceptable thanks to

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Saïd Ben Saïd
Written by
Agnès de Sacy
Pascal Bonitzer
Director of Photography
Romain Winding
Editor
Élise Fievet
Production Designer
Manu de Chauvigny
Music
Alexei Aïgui
Sound
Philippe Richard

Gérard Hardy
Olivier Dô Hùu
Costume Designer
Marielle Robaut

©SBS Productions
Production Companies
Saïd Ben Saïd presents
With the participation of Orange
Cinéma Séries
In association with Cinéma 6,
Soficinéma 8

With the support of
Région Île-de-France,
Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image Animée
An SBS Productions production

Cast
Jean-Pierre Bacri
Damien
Isabelle Carré
Zorica, 'Aurore'
Kristin Scott Thomas
Iva

Claude Rich
Sébastien Hauer
Marin Orcand Tourrés
Noé
Masahiro Kashiwagi
Satoshi
Arthur Igual
Antoine
Jackie Berroyer
Lobatch
Agathe Bonitzer
Laetitia
Iliana Lolic
Vera
Francis Leplay

Marco
Philippe Duclos
Judge Henri
Hortense, 'Henri H'
Joséphine Derenne
Blandine Hauer
Stanislas Stanic
Marek

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Arrow Film

Distributors Ltd
9,021 ft +0 frames
French theatrical title
Cherchez Hortense

Iva and Damien live in Paris with their adolescent son Noé. Iva is a theatre director, Damien teaches Asian culture to businessmen. Their lives change when Damien is asked to seek the help of his father Sébastien, president of the Council of State, on behalf of Serbian immigrant Zorica, a friend of Iva's brother, who wants to obtain French nationality. He is unable to communicate with his intimidating father and thus fails to help Zorica, incurring everyone's disapproval.

Damien discovers that Zorica is the same person as 'Aurore', a young woman he has met by chance and is attracted to; meanwhile Iva has an affair with one of her actors, Antoine. Damien throws her out of their home, looks after Noé and does his best to obtain documentation for 'Aurore'/Zorica by going to a higher authority, Judge Henri Hortense. He fails again but she is moved by his efforts; the end of the film suggests that he offers her marriage and thus French nationality.



Sound man: Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde travels across Ireland in Pat Collins's meditative *Silence*

Silence

Ireland 2011

Director: Pat Collins

Certificate PG 87m 13s

Reviewed by Mark Sinker

In a much-repeated anecdote, the composer John Cage described a visit early in his career to the anechoic chamber at Harvard. In this room, scientifically designed to be without sound, Cage heard two sounds, one high and one low. He asked the engineer in charge what was happening, and was told that the high sound was his nervous system, the low sound his blood as it circulated. Wherever you go, you can't escape yourself.

The central character in Pat Collins's elusive, sparse, meditative movie *Silence* is played by (and named for) Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde, with Collins one of the film's co-writers. Eoghan is an Irish sound recordist returned from Berlin to capture the noise of nothing. "I'm recording areas away from manmade sound," he tells one of the lonely figures he encounters, striding towards him far out in some lonely marsh. "So you're here?" the man responds with gentle cheek, wondering perhaps if the crank hadn't thought it through. "I'm here yes, but I'm keeping quiet."

Several of the half-dozen conversations he has with those he encounters across Ireland

— often with people playing themselves — have this same thread of amused bafflement on both sides, as if the project can't help but make them thoughtful. But much more of the film is people-free: hills, moors, scarps, rivers, woods, sky, great Atlantic breakers, deserted buildings seen from afar or from intimately close. And lots and lots of types of birdsong.

John Cage's most famous piece — the one everyone calls 'Silence', confusing it with a collection of his essays — is '4'33"', in which the pianist sits still, for the time-length of the title, so that what the audience begins to hear is all the other sounds we choose not to notice, during music and other activities: the sounds that don't 'belong'. Composing by chance — making decisions via the I Ching — Cage hoped we'd stop listening to a note as part of an arc of melody or the evolution of a rhythm, free ourselves from the artist's mere intentions, and hear sound in itself. Given this consonance of titles, Cage is surely the mute elephant in these landscapes.

Hard, though, not to also think of *Krapp's Last Tape*, Samuel Beckett's monologue with tape recorder written for Northern Irish actor Patrick Magee: elderly Krapp cackling at recordings that his younger self had made, for their artistic pretensions, but envying him his choices and the sharp experiences obscured by the overripe poeticism. *Silence* is quite unmalevolent, its will

to deflation much gentler and unKrapp-like, but still there's the melancholy of what we didn't see or hear in the place we first were. Eoghan is drawn more and more to echoes — visual and aural — of his own childhood on a small island of fishing folk. What happened and what didn't; what was said and what wasn't; can projects ever truly be seen through?

I'm no expert on Seamus Heaney's poetry but that seems to be here too, with the verbal richness of its sense of rural touch, its haunted bogs and islands; its persistent but oblique return to the violent buried history of a now semi-emptied land. Heaney's poem 'Clearances', in *The Haw Lantern* — inspired by the death of his mother — ends with the line "Silent, beyond silence listened for". And of course there's the famous final paragraph of Joyce's short story 'The Dead': "[The snow] was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves." The weather's wrong, and so's the route (Eoghan is travelling all over, rather than simply west from Dublin), but the feel is perhaps familiar.

Except — importantly, and against Cage's precepts — these quickly threaten to become too-grand ghosts, a panoply of Important Irish Voices the Reviewer Knows, conjured into the film's beckoning absences. "I'm not really collecting



Much of the film is people-free: hills, moors, scarps, rivers, woods, sky, deserted buildings seen from afar or from intimately close

collecting stories,” Eoghan tells someone – but stories come anyway, looked for or no. Which is the risk, when you make a work of spaces that want to be filled: you sit down to enjoy ‘4’33” and someone else’s music blares through a too-thin wall. Do you even have standing – per the work’s rules – to say this is wrong or inappropriate?

Actually, the music here is well chosen and carefully inserted: Rory Gallagher and Sandy Denny on the tape-deck as Eoghan drives; Eoghan himself gently singing an old song in the old style, almost under his breath. He has a good voice for this, somehow unexpectedly: he changes as he first sings from a faintly irritating presence – nervy, needy, unplaced, a cagouled distraction from the hiss of wind through sedge – into a companion whose quizzical stillness we can spend time with, whose unfolding puzzlement of quest we are caught up in.

A film like this has other dangers, perhaps. The first is that nature must now come at us through a scrim of cinematic conventions, which so seamlessly fashion our responses. There’s a refreshing change of pace from most rival titles, even prizewinning ones, and from the busy media chatter around them – so it’s easy to make more of its pleasant, natural-seeming stillness than we quite ought. Easy, that is, to overlook the sly technologies that stitch together such an illusion, the unspoken downside of the sophistication of our modern cultural apperception. Cinema is wily because of what’s left out: director, camera and sound crew are quieter here even than Eoghan, in every empty room or clearing or col. The deep pull of this film is orchestrated deeply artfully – and yet, in its pared-down way, it’s also scrupulous about reminding us about the technological play at work. Taped music is switched off into plain car-purr; sound jump cuts overtly anticipate their visual scene-changing analogue; very early, still in Berlin, we watch Eoghan working on a sound piece that’s a looped collage of German media voices.

One of his well-met fellows claims to believe that if you stand in one spot long enough, you’ll realise that “all the world is kind of a noise” and that you won’t “find out anything if [you] move somewhere else”. Another argues that the “velvety texture” of silence is made up of all the subliminal sounds coming at you from great distances, folding together into a great hush. And that this happens with history too: all the bits that don’t get into its known structures – “forgotten, never heard, never expressed

themselves” – cancel one another out into a vast voiceless confusion. All the same, everyone Eoghan meets is au fait with cameras, radio, television, the possibility of travel and the approximate modern character of Berlin, or anyway Blackpool: in its close-to-zero-degree way, the film is very funny about all this.

The second danger is the one this review already courts – that of a too-generic, bought-by-the-yard empathy: my faintly pat litany of high-cultural Irishness (and you wonder if the black-and-white archive footage Collins quilts in here and there merely stands in for similar or related scenes of social history, as it so often must in documentaries). But again, the film seems to rescue itself from the risk: because actually we’re pulled down through the sentimental mid-level parochial to a layer of very particular accents and dialects and birds (I’m not competent to pin them down but assume them to be as varied as Eoghan’s travels), and of old local maps used as establishing shots – those moments of fractal dissolve when a given geographical feature (say a small lake near Skibbereen) fills the screen and any familiarity of coastal outline becomes so large it’s lost to the casual traveller. Zoom further in still and the blistered paint or damp stain on a wall of a deserted house in turn becomes a map, to look at and touch and lose yourself in, child-style.

At beginning and end – though we don’t learn this directly in the film – we hear a reel-to-reel recording, made in the 1960s, of the actor’s mother, children’s writer Nellie Nic Giolla Bhríde, singing ‘The Breeze and I’. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Tina Moran

Written by

Pat Collins
Sharon Whooley
Eoghan Mac
Giolla Bhríde

Director of

Photography
Richard Kendrick

Film Editor

Tadhg O’Sullivan

Location Sound

John Brennan
Eamon Little

©South Wind Blows
& Harvest Films Ltd

Production

Companies
South Wind Blows &
Harvest Film present
in association
with RTE and the
Broadcasting
Authority of Ireland

With the
participation of
Bord Scannán
na hÉireann/
Irish Film Board
Produced with
the support
of investment
incentives provided
by the government
of Ireland
Developed with the
support of the MEDIA
Programme of the
European Union
Developed with
the assistance
of Bord Scannán
na hÉireann/
Irish Film Board
A South Wind
Blows/Harvest
Film production
Made with the
support of the
Broadcasting

Authority of Ireland
in association with
Raidió Teilifís Éireann
and with the support
of Bord Scannán
na hÉireann/
Irish Film Board

Cast

Eoghan Mac
Giolla Bhríde
Hilary
O’Shaughnessy
Andrew Bennett
Jens K. Müller
Michael Harding

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

New Wave Films

7,849 ft +8 frames

The present. Berlin-based sound recordist Eoghan returns to his native Ireland, to try to capture the sounds of quietness. He travels to isolated woods but manmade sounds intrude on the birdsong and the wind, and he journeys on, crisscrossing the country, recording on hills and by rivers and lakes, and talking to the people he meets. A conversation at supper puts him in mind of strange sounds on the wind, voices and song when he was small – and of his first home on Tory Island off the north-west coast. On Inishbofin he visits a photographic museum documenting the island’s recent history; he talks to the local woman who runs it, and they discuss the people who have left and those who have stayed, why some went to the mainland and further, and why she returned. Thinking more and more of all the stories that get lost to history, Eoghan returns to Tory Island. There he finds the house he still owns, empty for years now and open to the elements. He gazes out of the window and seems to hear the voices and songs from his childhood.



Food for thought: Michael Harding and Eoghan Mac Giolla Bhríde



Mommie dearest: Julianne Moore and Onata Aprile in Scott McGehee and David Siegel's updating of Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*

What Maisie Knew

USA 2013

Directors: Scott McGehee, David Siegel

Certificate 15 98m 49s

Reviewed by Philip Horne

In the late 1990s there was a rush of film adaptations of Henry James – Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady*, Iain Softley's *The Wings of the Dove*, Agnieszka Holland's *Washington Square*, Paul Unwin's *The American*, James Ivory's *The Golden Bowl* – and one might at a stretch include, as a conscious variation on 'The Turn of the Screw' via Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* (1961), Alejandro Amenábar's *The Others* (2001). Since then there has been a steady trickle of dubious adaptations of 'The Turn of the Screw', and some obscure, intriguing-sounding European TV or low-budget versions of other James tales ('The Friends of the Friends', 'The Third Person', 'The Private Life') – but nothing that has reached the mainstream until now.

What Maisie Knew, an adaptation of the expatriate American's 1897 novel of childhood and divorce, modernised and repatriated from late-Victorian London to contemporary bohemian New York, has been something of

an arthouse success in the US, partly no doubt because of the attractive star casting. This handsome film, by the directing team of Scott McGehee and David Siegel, from a script by Nancy Doyné and Carroll Cartwright, boasts, in fact, excellent performances: from Julianne Moore as Susanna (James's Ida Farange), Maisie's glamorous, egotistical, monstrous mother, here an ageing rock star rather than an idle, billiard-playing society beauty; Steve Coogan as Beale (James's Beale Farange), her handsome beast of a father, here a somewhat desperate art dealer rather than a leisured ex-diplomat haunting the clubs of "perpetual Piccadilly";



Changing partners: Steve Coogan with Vanderham

Alexander Skarsgård as Lincoln (James's Sir Claude), Susanna's second partner, here a highly sympathetic, unworldly, quite childlike bartender instead of an impecunious and rather ineffectual aristocrat with a weakness for women; and appealing young Scots actress Joanna Vanderham as Margo, Maisie's loving and also childlike nanny, who becomes Beale's second partner and then, through a shared affection for Maisie, ends up with Lincoln.

It gives some measure of the film's difference from the book – softening, sentimentalising, de-eroticising – that Margo is very unlike James's Miss Overmore, Maisie's first nanny, who turns, when she marries and becomes (to her circle) 'Mrs Beale', into almost as formidable a beauty and manipulator as Ida. Mrs Beale is pitted against and contrasted with second nanny Mrs Wix – older, poorer, uglier and more moralistic – who takes on the role of protector of Maisie's 'morality' amid the decadent goings-on of a set James probably based on that of the Prince of Wales, Edward VII-to-be. Mrs Wix appears in the film – unnamed save in the credits – for a minute at most, hired by Susanna to replace Margo, and very ancient and severe-looking in a film where youth and informality dominate – but she is swiftly despatched again when

Maisie finds her scary and complains that "she smells funny" (it's as if the film agrees).

The real star of the movie, at any rate – present in every scene – is the delightful, tiny, attaching six-year-old Onata Aprile as Maisie Beale (Coogan's Beale seems to have the same first and last name). Her sweet, slightly raspy voice and great naturalness and intelligence make it interesting and touching to sense her reactions when she watches the appalling behaviour of her parents. It is, however, a major difference between movie and book that Maisie remains essentially the same age throughout the film, which was shot over 35 days – whereas James's novel stretches over years and charts a process of increasing exposure to adult rancours, desires, complications and weaknesses that carries its heroine to a new maturity. In fact, James wrote in a letter in 1898 that in the novel "my climax, arrived at, was marked *by*, and consisted of, the stroke of the hour of the end of [the girl's] childhood". One might say that in the film the end seems to mark instead the *start* of the girl's real childhood proper – away from New York noise and parental awfulness in a seaside idyll with two sweet young parent-substitutes, ready to take a boat trip on placid waters. Nothing in the script invokes the dubious future.

The film succeeds best as a fable, an affecting fantasy in which an unloved child can replace unsatisfactory parents with new improved ones brought together by love of her. This Maisie never gets old enough to be suspected of manipulateness, as James's does (excusable though her manoeuvrings are). The absence of voiceover, and the fact that there is little attention given to Maisie's patterns of behaviour in ways that might give us access to her inner life, leaves us on the surface with a wonderfully touching performance but no real equivalent of the deep feeling of responsibility of James's Maisie, or of the crisis of her so-called 'moral sense' at the novel's climax. However, enough remains of the traumatic events in James's story to give the film a spine; one worries for Maisie and her young carers, and the sugaring of innocence with which the action is served up makes the nightmare of childhood



Maisie in the middle: Aprile with Alexander Skasgård as Lincoln and Joanna Vanderham as Margo

abandonment palatable – whereas in James's novel it's as much the controlled indignation and irony in the extraordinarily supple third-person narrator's voice, filtering Maisie's perceptions, that keep the horror at a distance.

One can see a continuity with McGehee and Siegel's films since their striking debut with the ambitious, schematic identity/amnesia thriller *Suture* in 1993 – and perhaps particularly the glossy Berkeley-set drama of spiritual crisis *Bee Season* (2005), with its sensitive, observant

Maisie's monstrous mother is an ageing rock star rather than an idle society beauty, her father a somewhat desperate art dealer rather than a leisured diplomat

11-year-old heroine (gifted at spelling, hence the title) watching parents Richard Gere and Juliette Binoche and brother Max Minghella almost fall apart (it could have been called *What Elly Knew*). Parenting was also the central focus of their Ophuls remake *The Deep End* (2001), a sensitive but contrived family thriller in which Tilda Swinton so cares for her gay teenage son that she hides his blackmailing lover's body in Lake Tahoe after an accident. In their most recent film, *Uncertainty* (2009), a generically uneven variation on Kieslowski's *Blind Chance* (1987) starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, the whole family-drama plot hinges on a decision whether to abort a pregnancy or become parents.

Looking through their oeuvre – decent in feeling, liberal, sensitive, intelligent, gravitating (in the last three films) towards a tasteful, observational naturalism, increasingly overlaid by a New Age-ish melancholy-but-uplifting indie-movie score that seems to say we're in the groove of *American Beauty* or *Little Miss Sunshine* – it's easier to see why the ferocity and irony of James's novel wouldn't fit their bill, and why the Doyme-Cartwright version appealed to them. James wrote when divorce was rare and Maisie's treatment an isolated outrage; in our much changed world it's unusual to find a person without direct experience of family break-up. For James, the selfishness of Ida and Beale is symptomatic of the abdications of a whole upper class; the film's Susanna is a rock star and its Beale a shitty Englishman, both exceptions to the rule of general niceness (their demanding careers also give them some excuse for their neglect).

For a sharper, more richly satisfying film about children and the damage of marital discord, one could go to, say, *The 400 Blows*, *Fresh*, *The Squid and the Whale* or *A Separation*. But soft-centred and bland though it is as a version of James, the McGehee-Siegel *What Maisie Knew* is worth seeing for the performances – especially those of Coogan and Moore, who manage to suggest something human trapped inside the carapace of monstrous compulsions – and for the way it captures something of the moral urgency of the original about the vulnerability of childhood.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Daniela Taplin
Lundberg
Daniel Crown
William Teitler
Charles Weinstock
Screenplay
Nancy Dayne
Carroll Cartwright
Based on the novel
by Henry James
**Director of
Photography**

Gile Nuttgens
Editor
Madeline Gavin
Production Designer
Kelly McGehee
Music
Nick Urata
Sound Mixer
Jan McLaughlin
Costume Designer
Stacey Battat
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**Production
Companies**
A Red Crown
production
A Charles Weinstock/
William Teitler
production
in association
with 120 db
Films and Koda
Entertainment and
Dreambridge Films
A film by Siegel

& McGehee
Executive Producers
Riva Marker
Jennifer Roth
Marissa McMahan
Todd Traina
Anne O'Shea
Peter Fruchtmann
Eva Maria Daniels
Todd J. Labarowski
Stephen Hays

Cast
Julianne Moore
Susanna
Alexander Skarsgård
Lincoln
Onata Aprile
Maisie
Joanna Vanderham
Margo
Steve Coogan
Beale
Dolby Digital

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Distributor
Curzon Film World
8,893 ft +8 frames

New York, the present. In a chaotic bohemian household, ageing rock star Susanna sings a lullaby to Maisie, her seven-year-old daughter. Maisie has a young Glaswegian nanny, Margo. Susanna and her partner Beale, a struggling English art dealer, row constantly in front of Maisie. They separate. After a bitter custody battle, Susanna and Beale are given joint custody of Maisie. They continue to feud. Beale takes Maisie to his apartment, where Margo is now living. Susanna sends flowers to Maisie, but Beale intercepts and bins them; Maisie retrieves and treasures them. Collecting Maisie, Susanna is outraged to find that Margo is with Beale. She employs the elderly Mrs Wix as nanny, but Mrs Wix frightens Maisie and is soon dismissed. Beale marries Margo. Retaliating, Susanna marries handsome

young bartender Lincoln, who becomes attached to Maisie. Beale and Susanna, both travelling for work, repeatedly neglect Maisie. Their disillusioned spouses are increasingly thrown together by their affection for Maisie. Beale leaves Margo, returning to England. Maisie declines his offer to take her with him. Susanna quarrels jealously with Lincoln over Maisie. One night she abandons Maisie at his bar; he isn't there, and Maisie sleeps at a waitress's apartment. Margo fetches her and they take a train to a borrowed beach house where they are joined by Lincoln. Margo and Lincoln embrace. One night Susanna turns up in her tour bus, offering to take Maisie. Maisie refuses and Susanna leaves. In the morning, Maisie, happy with her adoptive parents, is about to go on a boat trip.

Aftershock

USA/Chile 2012
Director: Nicolás López
Certificate 18 89m 25s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"You're like a miner trapped in a giant vagina," Pollo (Nicolás Martínez) tells Ariel (Ariel Levy), hoping to extricate his best friend from a disastrous relationship.

Pollo's words are a crude mixed metaphor for a hybrid film. Certainly the first 30 or so minutes of Chilean director Nicolás López's *Aftershock* are concerned with the relationships and sexual mores of six characters shown drinking, partying and texting the nights away in scenes reminiscent of López's coarse 2010 comedy *Que pena tu vida* (also starring a lovelorn Levy). Yet Pollo's crass allusion to the Copiapó mining accident, coupled with the film's title and the presence (as producer, co-writer and star) of *Hostel* director Eli Roth, hints at the seismic chaos and sleazy genre elements to come, when these two Chilean locals and four international guests see their broadly carefree lives suddenly crushed (not to mention shot, burnt, raped and axed) by acts of both God and man.

If the routines that follow – avoid the aftershocks! Evade the rape-minded prison escapes! – marry disaster tropes with sadistic cat-and-mouse, a bizarre climactic sequence suggests a psychological undercurrent to all this onscreen catastrophe. For, after her anguish over a past abortion has been clearly established, final girl Monica (Andrea Osvárt) finds herself trapped in 'uterine' underground tunnels alongside mummified baby corpses. Confronted with her own trauma in an unexpected realisation of Pollo's figurative language, Monica delivers herself through the cave's vulval entrance – although a final image lets genre have the last wave. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Eli Roth
Brian Oliver
Miguel Asensio
Llamas

Written by

Eli Roth
Nicolás López
Guillermo Amoedo

Director of

Photography

Antonio Quercia

Editor

Diego Macho Gómez

Production

Designer

Nelson Daniel

Music

Manuel Riveiro

Sound Mixer

Mauricio Molina

Costume Designers

Elisa Hormazabal

Jeremy Scott

Stunt Co-ordinator

Wernher Schurmann

©Vertebra

Aftershock Film, LLC

Production

Companies

Eli Roth presents

a Dragonfly

Entertainment/

Vertebra Films

production in

association

with SOBRAS

Productions and

Cross Creek Pictures

Executive

Producers

Mac Cappuccino

Helen Cappuccino

Nicolás López

James Holt

Cast

Eli Roth

Gringo

Andrea Osvárt

Mónica

Ariel Levy

Ariel

Natasha Yarovenko

Irina

Nicolás Martínez

Pollo

Lorenza Izzo

Kylie

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

8,047+8 ft + frames

Valparaíso, the present. Ariel and Pollo are showing international guests Gringo, Monica, Irina and Kylie 'the real Chile' when a severe earthquake strikes. During the aftershocks that follow, murderous convicts escape from the local prison and a tsunami approaches. No one survives.

Any Day Now

USA 2012
Director: Travis Fine

Reviewed by Ashley Clarke

The striking down of the Defense of Marriage Act by the Supreme Court in July 2013 – and the joy with which the ruling was received in many quarters internationally – signalled a significant positive step in the ongoing struggle for equal rights for gay people in the US. Travis Fine's *Any Day Now*, which is set in 1979 and inspired by a true story (though the location has shifted from Brooklyn to West Hollywood), transports us back to a time when the idea of a groundswell of legislative and public support for such a case was but a distant dream.

Alan Cumming, clearly relishing the rare opportunity to devour a leading film role, plays Rudy, a willowy cabaret performer with money worries and noisy-neighbour problems. One day, intending to confront the neighbour in question – drug-addled single mother Marinna – he bursts into her flat only to find her 14-year-old Down's syndrome son Marco (a genuinely moving turn from Isaac Leyva, who also has Down's syndrome) left to fend for himself following her recent arrest. Immediately feeling paternal, Rudy sets about taking the necessary steps to ensure that Marco avoids the vagaries of the foster-care system. His chief ally is Paul (Garret Dillahunt), the closeted lawyer he's been seeing. The ensuing narrative attempts, with varying degrees of success, to balance a number of emotive issues – blossoming love between the men, disability, parenthood, coming out, professional progress – before finally morphing into a conventionally rendered courtroom drama.

Any Day Now scores most strongly in its understated depiction of the relationship between Rudy and Paul, which must necessarily develop within a context of stultifying external prejudice. Rudy exists on the fringes of society, while the once married Paul, as is made clear in workplace scenes with his overtly laddish boss, feels that he must keep his true identity hidden. With his square jaw, sad eyes and elfin ears poking out from underneath a severe bowl cut, the particularly impressive Dillahunt exudes a quiet dignity, though both actors share an obvious chemistry

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Travis Fine
Kristine Hostetter
Fine

Chip Hourihan

Liam Finn

Written by

Travis Fine

George Arthur Bloom

Director of

Photography

Rachel Morrison

Film Editor

Tom Cross

Production Designer

Elizabeth Garner

Original Score

Joey Newman

Sound Mixers

Gary W. Day

James Ridgley

Costume Designer

Samantha Kuester

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Production

Companies

PFM Pictures

presents a Famleefilm

production

A film by Travis Fine

Executive Producers

Maxine Makover

Anne O'Shea

Wayne LaRue Smith

Dan Skahan

Cast

Alan Cumming

Rudy Donatello

Garret Dillahunt



The parent trap: Garret Dillahunt, Alan Cumming

and make their time-honoured opposites attract dynamic convincing and touching.

Around them, the oppressive atmosphere of the period is cleverly accentuated by the deliberate drabness of the production design and costuming. Only Rudy's drag performances betray a hint of glamour; otherwise, audiences can have fun counting how many different shades of brown the cast wear. Elsewhere, homophobia is dispensed with banal regularity; one of the film's most haunting and instructive moments comes when a caseworker casually asks Marco if his adoptive parents have "touched his private parts".

Unfortunately, it often feels as if Fine simply doesn't trust his story to be affecting enough by itself, so he lards proceedings with a surfeit of soapy, saccharine sentimentality, embodied most egregiously in the numerous torch songs that aspiring singer Rudy is permitted to warble. Indeed, one of the film's biggest issues stems from Fine's inability (or unwillingness) to put a leash on Cumming the actor, and consequently Rudy the character; too often the story centres on him. Similarly, Fine's decision to reduce many of the supporting cast to one-dimensional baddies, particularly in the final third – see Gregg Henry's showboating turn as a smug lawyer – unnecessarily undermines the authenticity of the drama. That said, the overriding impression left by *Any Day Now* is of a well-realised time-capsule of a repressive era, and a stirring document of a brave fight against prejudice. **S**

West Hollywood, 1979. Rudy Donatello is a struggling musician and drag performer in a gay nightclub, where he meets closeted district attorney Paul Fleiger. Returning to his apartment, Rudy finds Marco, a 14-year-old neighbour with Down's syndrome, left alone after the arrest of his mother Marianna on a drugs charge. Rudy takes in the abandoned boy but Family Services intervenes and takes Marco into foster care. Rudy asks Paul to help him gain custody of Marco and the pair visit Marianna in prison to coax her into signing temporary

guardianship papers, which she does. Rudy and Paul, now in a relationship, become Marco's guardians, but when their relationship is called into question by the court system they face a legal battle to become his permanent guardians. The court eventually rules against them and Marco is placed back in the custody of his mother. Marco wanders out of the apartment while Marianna embarks on a drug binge and he dies under a bridge three days later. Rudy, who has been pursuing a recording career, sings in a club while Paul watches.

Bachelorette

USA 2012

Director: Leslye Headland

Certificate 15 87m 37s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Every week it seems that a new dismal statistic comes floating down the social-media stream about women working in movies, movies being made for or featuring women, women writing about movies. Successful exceptions, when they appear, attract inordinate attention. One such exception was Paul Feig's *Bridesmaids* (2011), whose box-office performance was almost certainly responsible for first-time director Leslye Headland's *Bachelorette* – based on her own off-Broadway play about a wedding-eve celebration gone awry – being fast-tracked into production.

Bachelorette is a small redress to the gender imbalance but it doesn't do much for the imbalance of good-to-crap comedies, being no great shakes in the laughs department – although Kirsten Dunst, Isla Fisher and Lizzy Caplan, as bridesmaids Regan, Katie and Gena respectively, prove a creditable comic ensemble. The blearily acerbic Caplan is particularly fine, making gabbling about blowjob technique to a stranger on a plane funnier than it has any right to be.

It's to Headland's credit that, with minimal recourse to fatuous sisterhood, she's able to play on the considerable foibles of her characters without sacrificing sympathy, sustaining audience investment while showing the bridal party at their absolute worst. (Though everything, really, is seen at its worst – the movie is terribly lit.) Rebel Wilson is given very little funny business as the bride, and the male talent – including a cruising Adam Scott and Kyle Bornheimer, who does something that's a bit like Powers Boothe giving Seth Rogen line-readings – fare less well still. No screen satirist to equal Dot Parker or Dawn Powell has emerged here – but here's hoping Caplan's around when one does. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Jessica Elbaum
Will Ferrell
Adam McKay
Brice Dal Farra
Claude Dal Farra
Lauren Minsch

Written by

Leslye Headland
Based on her play

Director of

Photography
Doug Emmett

Editor

Jeffrey Wolf

Production

Designer

Richard Hoover

Music

Andrew Feltenstein

John Nau

Sound Mixer

John D'Aquino

Costume Designer

Anna Bingemann

©Strategic Motion

Ventures, LLC

Production

Companies

Radius-TWC and
Strategic Motion
Ventures present
a BCDP Pictures
and Gary Sanchez
Productions
production

Executive

Producers

Chris Henchy

Paul Prokop

Jason Janego

Tom Quinn

Cast

Kirsten Dunst

Regan

Isla Fisher

Katie

Lizzy Caplan

Gena

James Marsden

Trevor

Kyle Bornheimer

Joe

Rebel Wilson

Becky

Adam Scott

Clyde

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

7,885ft +8 frames

New York, the present. Gena, Regan and Katie convene in New York for the wedding of high-school friend Becky, who is the first of their group to marry. After Becky retires early, they accidentally tear her wedding dress during a drunken and drugged evening. They embark on a frantic all-night scramble to repair it, and eventually pull together to save the day. The wedding goes ahead as planned.

Call Girl

Sweden/Norway/Finland/Ireland 2012

Director: Mikael Marcimain

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

In the UK in 2013, the grooming of children, coerced into sex with men at all levels of society, could hardly be a more topical subject. The Metropolitan Police's Operation Yewtree, looking into decades of sexual abuse by Jimmy Savile and others, and Operation Bullfinch, concerning child prostitution in Oxford, make *Call Girl*'s themes not only timely but urgent.

The film focuses on Iris and Sonja, two vulnerable teenage girls living in care in Stockholm in the 1970s, and their selection and grooming by a charismatic woman, Dagmar Glans, who is eventually given a suspended sentence for gross procuring, having provided sexual services to politicians, police officers and diplomats. On the eve of the 1976 election, Glans is being phone-tapped by workaholic police officer John Sandberg, whose evidence – gathered in the face of threats – secures her conviction but cannot safeguard either Iris or himself.

On its release in 2012, *Call Girl* caused controversy in Sweden, winning the Silver Audience Award at the Stockholm International Film Festival but also provoking national debate for its claim to have uncovered darker truths behind the 1976 conviction of a madam who procured prostitutes for government officials. In particular, the cut shown in Sweden alleged that the then prime minister, Olof Palme, bought sex from underage girls; Palme's son sued unsuccessfully, but direct references to Palme were cut from the film (leaving some scenes rather elliptical). Debates persist about the film's opening claim to be "based on a true story", yet there is clearly something that resonates, disturbingly, with the national psyche. Fans of Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy will find familiar ideas about Sweden's liberal social contract being rotten at the core.

Viewers expecting a coruscating critique of Swedish society, delivered with pace and presented through the eyes of a perceptive and

powerful female character, will be disappointed. Director Mikael Marcimain was second-unit director on Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011) and imports wholesale that film's fascination with the 1970s spy thriller. Instead of a thoughtful reworking, *Call Girl* is more like *Life on Mars*: claiming to vilify the era (as well as holding up a critical mirror to our own), it is no more than a fetishisation. Every sideburn, typeface and car is era-perfect, as are the shakily zoomed rack focuses on crucial details, gratuitous aerial shots of rain-slick motorways and synth soundtrack. What this specificity lacks is any sense of urgency for contemporary viewers outside Sweden, sapping the film of drama as the camera lavishes affection on a champagne glass or a newspaper. Its whisky-tinted look, a sort of Hipstagram-aged Technicolor, preserves the events it claims to recount in amber; if not quite nostalgic, it is certainly distancing.

With its early attempt to align our point of view with Iris's (after a confusing intro from the point of view of another character, Aspen, a government press officer), the film believes that it's on the side of the angels: yet its insistent and repeated shots of Iris and Sonja topless, often with little narrative rationale, as well as the inevitable semi-naked, artistically posed, horrifically murdered sex worker, replicate rather than resolve the use of visual pleasure and sadism to reward the male gaze. The shifts of POV – a narrative version of rack focus – between Iris and Sandberg creates an uneven dynamic, with Iris's story of abandonment and resilience aspiring to Lukas Moodysson, while Sandberg's procedural is televisual in its leaden rhythm of wiretapping, pedecconferencing and absent-fathering.

Sensationalising rather than analysing the real-life events, *Call Girl* lives up to its salacious title, one that strips dignity from Iris, Sonja and the other – older – women who work for Dagmar. Called in to testify to Sandberg and his partner, these stereotypical happy



Car trouble: Sofia Karemyr, Sven Nordin

hookers offer a montage of testimonies about the economic necessity for sex work – yet this rests on their claim of servicing a ‘better class’ of client. This is clearly meant to point up the hypocrisy of an earlier montage of stump speeches about the importance of economic and labour equality for women. Yet these soundbites, from female characters we’ve seen naked but never heard named, can’t speak to Iris and Sonja’s experience. Iris’s final flight from secure custody is intended as celebratory; but seeing her on the bus – her usual mode of transport when she’s working for Dagmar – conveys only a sickening sensation of repetition, as if she is travelling into our present where the same abuses are occurring. *Call Girl* does nothing to challenge or change that. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Mimmi Spång
Written by
Marietta von Hausswolff von Baumgarten
Director of Photography
Hoyte van Hoytema
Editor
Kristofer Nordin
Production Designer
Lina Nordqvist
Music
Mattias Bärjed
Sound Design/Mix
Petter Fladeby
Per Nyström
Costume Designer
Cilla Rörby

Chimney Pot, Dagsljus with support from Svenska Filminstitutet, Suomen Elokuvasaatio/Finlands Filmstiftelse, Nordisk Film & TV Fond, Bord Scannán na hÉireann/the Irish Film Board, Norsk Filminstitutt
Executive Producers
Helena Danielsson
Maria Dahlin

Magnus Krepper
prime minister
Hanna Ullerstam
Mona
Anders Beckman
Roy
Kristoffer Joner
Sören Laurin-Wall
Sverrir Gudnason
Krister

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles

Distributor
Curzon Film World

Cast

Sofia Karemyr
Iris Dahl
Simon J. Berger
John Sandberg
Pernilla August
Dagmar Glans
David Dencik
Aspen Thorin
Josefin Asplund
Sonja Hansson
Sven Nordin
Glenn
Ruth Vega
Fernandez
Sasja Mintze

Stockholm, 1976. Fourteen-year-old Iris is delivered to a children's home. When her friend Sonja arrives, they begin to break out and travel downtown to go clubbing. An older girl, Minna, takes them 'dancing' – private topless dancing for an older man. Through him they are introduced to Dagmar Glans, who is under surveillance by the police for procuring sexual services. Various police departments pass the buck between them on the case, which is further blocked by Aspen, a press officer for the justice minister, who is one of Dagmar's clients. However, detective John Sandberg is determined to pursue the case, despite being tailed and beaten by people he traces back to his own department. Iris and Sonja have sex with men at Dagmar's insistence; Iris attempts to resist and is beaten and blackmailed. Mona, the social worker at the children's home, tries to confront Iris and inform her superiors, but is rebuffed by both. When Iris collapses, she is sent to a secure home, where Sandberg finally tracks her down and persuades her to testify against Dagmar, who is now in detention. Iris's ability to identify high-level ministers who had sex with her leads to the investigation being shut down after Sandberg gives a damning report to the prime minister. Dagmar's sentence is suspended, Sandberg is killed in a hit-and-run incident, and Iris flees secure custody for an unknown future.

Citadel

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Ciarán Foy
Certificate 15 84m 39s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

A riot of social and psychological anxieties surface in this enterprising yet not altogether coherent low-budget first feature. Writer-director Ciarán Foy kicks off with a horribly effective moment of urban paranoia, when the twentysomething protagonist's pregnant partner is set upon by a gang of hoodies while he's stuck in the lift at the semi-derelict tower block the pair were about to vacate. We share his powerlessness, and it generates a shot of initial empathy when leading man Aneurin Barnard is left widowed, looking after a baby on his own and battling agoraphobia. Suddenly terrors lurk behind the frosted-glass front door of the dilapidated council house he now calls home, but what exactly is Barnard's twitching, wide-eyed Tommy afraid of? To some extent it's fear itself that's eating away at him – his group therapy counsellor encourages him to recognise his anxiety and then let it subside. This scene evidently prefigures the terrifying challenges the story has in store for its put-upon single father, but it's in the visualisation of those terrors that the film's strengths and failings alike will become evident.

The traumatic opener inside the tower block certainly plays like ramped-up realism, but the more we see of the surroundings, the further we drift into a desolate fantasy environment of vacant streets, empty buses and shuffling hooded figures more like extras in a zombie flick than recognisable inner-city troubled youth. We're in a world that's as much *Silent Hill* as *Harry Brown*, and while it's possible to salute Foy's aesthetic endeavour and put the heightened visuals down to a manifestation of Tommy's warped perspective, the question of just how much humanity we should ascribe to the film's hoodie threat becomes more troubling as the story progresses. Supportive nurse Marie (Wunmi Mosaku, bringing sympathetic warmth to a thankless role) voices familiar liberal platitudes about demonising the underprivileged, thus



Fear eats the soul: Aneurin Barnard

treating the situation as a genuine social issue, yet when James Cosmo's scenery-chewing renegade priest reveals that the infestation of feral adolescents can be traced back to the mutating spawn of a junkie mother left to rot in the tower's festering basement, we've entered the schlocky realm of B-movie exposition. When matters resolve themselves into a final-reel attack on the block, where the film's meagre production resources can only afford modest spectacle, that ongoing ambiguity hits a wrenching moment in a basement crammed with infected infants – having rescued his own baby held captive there by the hoodie threat, surely Barnard still has some compassion left for these other poor mites as he faces down his own fears?

The answer leaves one wondering whether Foy, while evidently channelling the Polanski of *Repulsion* and the Cronenberg of *Shivers* and *The Brood*, has ever realised that the very richest horror cinema tends to embrace the humanity within its monsters. Not here though, since *Citadel* shows not a moment's hesitation in blasting its mutant toddlers and zombie hoodies sky-high. Reactionary design or unthinking generic formula? The film doesn't appear to have made up its mind, and that kind of ambiguity isn't altogether productive. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Katie Holly
Brian Coffey
Written by
Ciarán Foy
Director of Photography
Tim Fleming
Edited by
Tony Kearns
Jake Roberts
Production Designer
Tom Sayer
Music
tomdandandy
Sound Mixer
Hugh Fox
Costume Designer
Anna Robbins

Produced with the support of investment incentives for the Irish film industry provided by the Government of Ireland
Supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland
Developed with the support of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board
Executive Producers
Gillian Berrie
David MacKenzie
Kieron J. Walsh

Dr Kelly
Amy Shiels
Joanne
Arlowe Saunders
Harry Saunders
Elsa

Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1]

Distributor
Way to Blue

7618 ft +8 frames

©Blinder Films and Citadel Films
Production Companies
Blinder Films/Sigma Films present in association with Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board and Creative Scotland

Cast

Aneurin Barnard
Tommy Cowley
James Cosmo
priest
Jake Wilson
Danny
Wunmi Mosaku
Marie
Ingrid Craigie

An unnamed city, present day. As Tommy and his pregnant partner Joanne move out of their largely abandoned tower block, she is attacked by hooded youngsters while he's trapped in the lift. Rushed to hospital, she delivers their daughter Elsa before lapsing into a coma. Tommy moves into a council house, looking after the baby while suffering terrifying agoraphobia. His counsellor advises him to feel the fear and let it pass. As Joanne's life support is terminated, he is befriended by nurse Marie. At Joanne's funeral, Tommy encounters a renegade priest who warns him that 'they' will come looking for the baby. That night, Tommy's home is attacked by hooded marauders, but he survives. Later, the priest tells him of plans to kill the zombie-like adolescents who've taken over the block. Marie warns against demonising troubled youth, but she is killed by them in an underpass. Tommy survives a subsequent attack during which they kidnap Elsa. Tommy and the priest decide to rescue Elsa and blow up the block. The priest confesses that he fathered twins by a junkie and left them in the basement, where they succumbed to a viral mutation. Inside the building, Tommy rescues Elsa from a cellar littered with infected infants, and assists the priest in opening the gas taps. Overcoming his fear, Tommy calmly walks past the hooded miscreants and out of the building, which blows up behind him.

The Great Hip Hop Hoax

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Jeanie Finlay

Reviewed by Perle Petit

"Get rich or try lying." It was a joke between two Scottish wannabe superstars that propelled them into the spotlight of the international music industry in the early 2000s. With this documentary, they intend to "set the record straight", stop lying and come clean.

Scottish rap duo Gavin Bain and Billy Boyd fast-tracked their way to the top by reinventing themselves as two loud-mouthed Californian hip-hop artists, Silibil n' Brains. However, cracks began to show as they immersed themselves so deep in character that they started to lose their sense of identity, and they split up before they could reach the stardom they'd set out to achieve.

Jeanie Finlay's documentary is held together by the daring of the two men but doesn't engage the audience as much as you'd expect. The film consists mainly of footage taken by the two at the time, skits of themselves as drunk American 'frat boys' let loose in London. This is interspersed with interviews with both men, and with friends and the industry experts they fooled, as well as animated sequences by Jon Burgerman, which replace unfilmed scenes. This last technique makes sure that we see the important parts of the duo's backstory, such as their first audition, where they are dubbed 'the rapping Proclaimers'. These animations serve the film well, for they reflect the two men's cartoon-like creations, which are based on the most superficial of American stereotypes.

We learn that the duo started off with an unrealistically naive view of the music business, and were utterly disheartened by the laughter of the record-label executives at an audition for 'the next Eminem'. Instead of giving up, however, they decided to get rid of whatever it was that made them 'unmarketable' – and this was where their Californian personas emerged.

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Al Morrow
Jeanie Finlay

Director of Photography

Roger Knott-Fayle

Editor

Jim Scott

Original Score

Paul Finlay
Michael Brennan

Sound Designer

Pip Norton

Animators

Will Anderson
Ainslie Henderson

©Hip Hop Hoax Ltd

Production Companies

BBC Scotland,
BBC Storyville and
Creative Scotland
present a Glimmer

Films & Met Film production

A film by Jeanie Finlay

With the support of the MEDIA programme of the European Union

Developed with the support of the Creative England Development Fund

BFI – Awarding funds from The National Lottery

Supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland

Produced by Hip Hop Hoax Ltd

Executive Producers
Stewart Le Maréchal

Jonny Persey

Jerry Rothwell

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Vertigo Films

A documentary about aspiring Scottish rappers Gavin Bain and Billy Boyd, who become disheartened after being laughed at during an audition and react by creating Californian frat-boy alter egos. In the early 2000s, they dupe their way up the music-industry ladder, bagging a record deal in 2004 after their first gig. But Gavin and Billy's friendship implodes because of the strain of the lie, and the band breaks up. Both men describe what happened at the time and their lives several years on.



Straight outta Dundee: Gavin Bain, Billy Boyd

Initially it was a joke, but Bain and Boyd were surprised by the interest they were suddenly receiving for exactly the same music rerecorded with American accents. As the film progresses we get the impression that either the 'hoax' wasn't as impressive as it is made out to be, or the documentary relies too much on their riotous friendship rather than showing the manner in which they took advantage of this suddenly profitable position. The moments that are the most watchable are when we see them interacting with people in the industry, such as the representative from Sony US who begins to question them on their American hometown.

But instead of tensions blowing up and exposing the pair, their relationship simply fizzles out due to Bain's excessive and ultimately limiting perfectionism and the budget cuts of the 2004 Sony BMG merger. The 'big reveal' comes years later, after Gavin has an existential crisis before his first gig back on stage and announces to the awaiting crowd: "I'm Scottish. I've never been to America."

The other interesting aspect of the film is the contrast between Gavin and Billy and their creations. Billy in particular is endearing, now a tattooed family man who insists that he forgot the 'dream' as soon as he walked out on Gavin. In contrast, Gavin is consumed by the pretence and still lives in London, trying to remain in an industry that's no longer interested in him. They're open about their friendship, though Billy loyally steers clear of any insult to his old friend while Gavin openly vents his anger at what he sees as a betrayal of the music and their partnership.

This candour is sadly ruined by the credits, in which the reunited Silibil n' Brains plug Gavin's book and their soon-to-be-released new album. Which begs the question of whether their complaint against the superficial and profit-oriented industry is as fake as their American accents. Their wish to take 'revenge' on the music business seems at odds with their desire simply to become famous. As Billy tries to tell us, their aim was to get their music 'out there', but it's clear throughout that they actually wanted to become a brand. At times too the film feels patchy in its details, leading us to suspect the authenticity of the information we're being given. Nevertheless, it's an intriguing watch, and the complete dedication and audacity of the duo's con is impressive. Ⓢ

Grown Ups 2

USA 2013
Director: Dennis Dugan
Certificate 12A 100m 48s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

The first *Grown Ups* gave its target audience an easy way to feel instantly emotionally connected to its ensemble quintet. Kevin James excepted, Adam Sandler, Rob Schneider, David Spade and Chris Rock had all been introduced to the cast of late-night sketch-comedy stalwart *Saturday Night Live* during the 1990-91 season. In the 20-plus years since then, they've aged in real time while appearing in various configurations in each other's work, frequently thanks to Sandler's benevolent patronage. *Grown Ups* gave viewers who've aged alongside these actors a chance to indulge in some light melancholy interspersed with hands-off ogling of younger women.

Where the first *Grown Ups* mostly consisted of the five friends trading unfunny insults at each other's expense, the sequel allows ageing fortysomethings who feel adrift in current mass media a measure of vicarious revenge on outsider tormentors (chiefly the inexplicably stupid kids these days, though look who's talking). Five of the six films Sandler's taken the lead in beginning with 2010's *Grown Ups* have him as a father at the start (the sole exception, 2011's *Just Go With It*, has him childless at the start but an adoptive dad by the end). Here he's married with three children and another on the way. "We have chicks and kids and high cholesterol," he fumes when explaining to his friends why they can't party like they used to. David Spade's Higgy was reprimanded multiple times for his heavy drinking in the first film, and the anti-indulgence message is repeated here, another compromise with age; steam-relieving boorishness, though, will never be sacrificed.

With Schneider's character absent and unmentioned, there are some marital frictions, invariably the fault of the wives: Maya Rudolph forgets her wedding anniversary, while Kevin James's wife Maria Bello apologises for failing to make time to make her husband "feel special", something he does for her – though presumably not while perfecting his 'burpsnart', a rapidly sequential burp, sneeze and fart which is the film's most repeated and final gag, an appropriate bookend for a movie that begins with an obviously CGI deer urinating on Sandler and wife Salma Hayek in bed.

Where the first film patriotically concluded on 4 July, this second instalment takes place on the last day of school/first night of summer. In the morning, Sandler takes over for a driver behaving erratically on illicit meds, driving his buddies around in a yellow school bus – an appropriately infantile setting for what's



Boys will be boys: *Grown-Ups 2*

to come. A lengthy interlude follows at big-box supermarket Kmart, a typical example of Sandler's open-for-business product placement. The void from Schneider's (blissful) absence (the former best friend isn't even mentioned in passing) is sort-of filled by another *SNL* alumnus, Colin Quinn, as a bitter townie who tones down his animosity from the first film to stand in aged solidarity with Sandler and his chums.

The heart of the matter lies in the 80s-themed bash Sandler throws in the final act. Never particularly culturally curious, Sandler's eternal frame of non-sports reference (and constant source of stale, overused sub-classic rock) is here unapologetically presented as preferable to the youths'. 'Spoiled', 'preppy' and 'uppity' are all acceptable terms of abuse for those college age and younger, and there's a strong oh-dear-oh-dear emphasis on spoiled infants (ice-cream-stand manager to little girl: "Here's a word you've probably never heard – no!"). After an earlier standoff with a group of cartoonish frat boys led by *Twilight* star Taylor Lautner, the film climaxes with 80s-clad partygoers unambiguously beating the stuffing out of the younger men.

Fear is the film's most sincere emotion, doubtlessly reflecting the worries of four performers sticking to their established grooves while fretting that "the party's over. We're irrelevant. We're old." The Sandler violence once unleashed on those who tormented the weak, stupid and powerless now violently answers the youthful competition, but age hasn't given Sandler, James et al newfound dignity. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Adam Sandler
Jack Giarraputo
Written by
Fred Wolf
Adam Sandler
Tim Herlihy
Based on characters
created by Adam
Sandler, Fred Wolf
**Director of
Photography**
Theo Van de Sande
Editor
Tom Costain
**Production
Designer**
Aaron Osborne
Music
Rupert Gregson-
Williams
Sound Mixer
Tom Williams
Costume Designer
Ellen Lutter

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Industries, Inc.
Production

Companies
Columbia Pictures
presents a Happy
Madison production
A film by Dennis
Dugan
**Executive
Producers**
Barry Bernardi
Allen Covert

Cast
Adam Sandler
Lenny Feder
Kevin James
Eric Lamsonoff
Chris Rock
Kurt McKenzie
David Spade
Marcus Higgins
Salma Hayek
Roxanne
Chase-Feder
Maya Rudolph
Deanne McKenzie
Maria Bello
Sally Lamsonoff
Nick Swardson

Nick
Colin Quinn
Dickie Bailey
Tim Meadows
Malcolm
Shaquille O'Neal
Officer Fluzoo
Alexander Ludwig
Braden
Georgia Engel
Mrs Lamsonoff
Steve Buscemi
Wiley

[uncredited]
Taylor Lautner
Andy, frat boy

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS**
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

9,072 ft +0 frames

New England, the present. Lenny Feder has moved with his wife and children back to his hometown. His childhood best friends Eric, Kurt and Higgy have also returned. The friends visit a quarry lake they used to frequent and confront a group of aggressive fraternity boys who make them jump naked into the water below. Later that evening, Lenny throws an 80s party to celebrate the first day of summer. The fraternity boys arrive to fight Lenny and his friends but are beaten up. After arguing with his pregnant wife Roxie about having a fourth child, Lenny apologises and they reconcile.

It's a Lot

United Kingdom 2013
Directors: Femi Oyeniran, Darwood Grace
Certificate 15 96m 21s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Co-director, co-writer and star Femi Oyeniran has explicitly cited *Risky Business* (1983) as inspiration for his first headlining feature, but while the earlier film deftly balanced crass comedy with a more measured and bittersweet tone, *It's a Lot* rarely strays from the broadest farce.

When black teenager Shaun (Oyeniran) moves from a posh private college to a far more downmarket one out of social conscience, he finds that wealth has usurped skin colour as a marker of his outsider status. His various dilemmas occasionally nudge pathos, but he's too much of a lummo to permit much identification. Despite occasional attempts at social comment and/or satire, every character is a crude and familiar stereotype – the racist white dad whose son is a virtuoso exponent of black street slang (scholarly definitions of which pop up on screen), the wiser-than-his-years little brother, the cliquey haridans exploiting slaving males, the nymphomaniac granny and so on.

While it's not without the occasional diversion (it's hard to imagine a white filmmaker staging the nightmare in which Shaun is ritualistically punished by his lawyer father in African tribal gear), the film is, like Shaun himself, too puppyishly eager to please to make any lasting impression. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Dean Fisher
Written by
Femi Oyeniran
Nicky Slimting
Walker
**Director of
Photography**
Richard Swingle
Edited by
Emanuele Giraldo
**Production
Designer**
Niina Topp
Music
Composed by
Tim Cronin
Sound Design
Mark Verner
Costume Design
Janine Jauvel

©Mirror Image
(It's a Lot) Ltd
**Production
Companies**
Mirror Image,
Scanner-Rhodes
Productions,
Graham Associates
& Kaleidoscope Film
Distribution present

**Executive
Producers**
Spencer Pollard
Caroline Stern
Robert Graham
Dean Fisher
Jonathan Willis

Cast
Femi Oyeniran
Shaun
Jazzie Zonzolo
Kai
Charlie Palmer-
Merkell
Sam
Red Madrell
Natalie
Eddie Kadi
Michael
Kojo
Mr Adebambi
Roxanne Pallett
Louise
Jack Doolan
James
Roxxy Sternberg
Chrissy
In Colour

Distributor
Kaleidoscope
Entertainment

8,671 ft +8 frames

North London, the present. After Shaun's wealthy parents go on holiday, he damages his father's Lotus car while trying to impress Sacred Heart School's alpha female Chrissy. Facing a huge repair bill, Shaun sets up a fake leukaemia charity, Buff Marrow Charity, and holds a fundraising party at his parents' house. Chrissy's friend Natalie tells Shaun that her sister has leukaemia, and offers to help publicise the charity. Following a wildly successful fundraising concert at the school, Shaun admits his deception on stage. He sells the Lotus to pay for Natalie's sister's bone-marrow transplant, and confesses all to his returning parents.

The Kings of Summer

USA 2013
Director: Jordan Vogt-Roberts
Certificate 15 94m 34s

Reviewed by Sam Wigley

Thoreau meets coming-of-age comedy in Jordan Vogt-Roberts's first feature, a *Walden* for the Instagram generation in which even the bearded growth of its young survivalist hero will be shaved into a hipster moustache – as neatly as a machete allows. Plagued by parental overbearance, teenager Joe (Nick Robinson) and two friends – Patrick (Gabriel Basso) and the oddball Biaggio (Moisés Arias) – run away from home to set up an encampment deep in the nearby forest, fishing, foraging and learning to be masters of their new universe over a long hot summer.

It's an off-kilter fusion of snarky wit and transcendentalist adventure, wedding flouncily beautiful Malickian imagery of the natural world with a belly-laugh count worthy of the cream of current American TV sitcoms. Past master of the pithy putdown, *Parks and Recreation*'s Nick Offerman is on quote-a-minute form as Joe's grouchy single father Frank – almost to the point that we miss his acid tongue when the film decamps to the woodlands. Patrick's parents (Megan Mullally and Marc Evan Jackson) are all suffocating Stepford perfection, their mollicoddling niceness as much an irritation for Patrick as Frank's gruff authoritarianism is for Joe.

The film pinpoints that moment on the cusp of maturity when the well-meaning prodding and reining in of mum and dad no longer feel tolerable. "My house, my rules," Frank barks at his son, forcing him to miss a date in favour of a (hilarious) family game night with his sister (*Community*'s Alison Brie). Joe's truant escapade is a necessary bid for independence, to build his own house and make his own rules; like Kit and Holly in *Badlands* (1973) or Sam and Suzy in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), he is escaping from society's impositions and limitations into the liberty of self-reliance and autonomy.

The first-time script by Chris Galletta harnesses some of the that-summer-my-life-changed-forever ambience of *Stand by Me* and the kids-let-loose hijinks of *The Goonies*, those lodestones of 80s teen-movie nostalgia. *The Kings* 



Wild at heart: Arias, Basso, Robinson

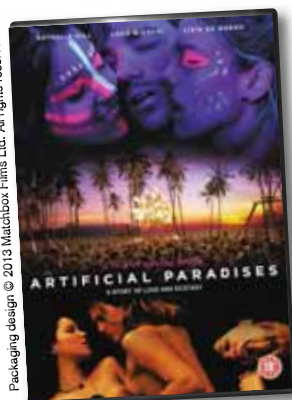
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released 26/08/13 **£10**



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subtitled/portuguese
released 26/08/13 **£10**

in the fog
subtitled/russian
released 26/08/13 **£10**



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the land of hope
subtitled/japanese
released 26/08/13 **£10**

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of *Summer* is a good deal funnier than either, even if it never quite convinces, or moves, as a coming-of-age drama. As with Thoreau, who built his own hut in the woods just 20 minutes' walk from his family and hometown, the stakes are never high enough: the kids' absence never has enough gravity for the parents; the police manhunt is roundly incompetent; Joe and his friends never seem weathered or affected by the wilderness.

Such plot holes may prevent the film kicking as drama, but *The Kings of Summer* still registers as a delight, in which a steady stream of sarcastic wit never undermines an essential warmth and generosity towards its characters. Some of this generosity grows indulgent, with the freakish Biaggio's far-out quirks getting wearisome in later stages, as if the filmmakers have grown complacent that we've already fallen for their character. But these are small complaints: Vogt-Roberts's film is a charming, hugely likeable debut. Somehow one more turn around the coming-of-age-movie track feels like a breath of fresh air. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tyler Davidson
Peter Saraf
John Hodges
Written by
Chris Galletta
Director of Photography
Ross Riege
Editor
Terel Gibson
Production Design
Tyler Robinson
Music
Ryan Miller
Sound Mixers
Ryan Putz
Marlowe Taylor
Costume Designer
Lynette Meyer

a Low Sparks
Films/Big Beach
production
Executive Producers
Richard Rothfeld
Jordan Vogt-Roberts

Cast
Nick Robinson
Joe
Gabriel Basso
Patrick
Moises Arias
Biaggio
Mary Lynn Rajskub
Captain Davis
Erin Moriarty
Kelly
Marc Evan Jackson
Mr Keenan
Megan Mullally
Mrs Keenan
Alison Brie
Heather

Nick Offerman
Frank

Dolby Digital/DTs
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

8,511 ft +0 frames

Production Companies
CBS Films presents

Ohio, the present. Grounded one too many times by his authoritarian single father Frank, teenager Joe hatches a plan to run away to the nearby forest and build a house of his own out of wood and scrap metal. His best friend Patrick also feels suffocated by his parents and is persuaded along on the adventure. The eccentric Biaggio joins them. Aiming to subsist on the land by hunting and foraging, Joe soon finds it easier to raid the bins of a local supermarket. Despite this concession, the three friends enjoy their newfound liberty, establishing an elaborate encampment in the forest.

The boys' parents inform the police of their missing children but the manhunt leads nowhere. Kelly, a girl Joe has a crush on, pays the three boys a visit in the woods with her friends. When Kelly gets together with Patrick, jealousy causes Joe to fall out with his friend. The tension ruins their forest idyll, and Patrick returns home to his parents. Worried about Joe, Kelly later leads Frank to Joe's hideout, where they find him backed into a corner by a poisonous snake. Biaggio arrives to help kill the snake but is bitten in the process. Frank and Joe get Biaggio to a local hospital. Frank tells Joe that he's proud of his son's bravery and resourcefulness. Kelly and Patrick insist they never intended to hurt Joe; the friends are reconciled.

Kuma

Austria 2012
Director: Umut Dag

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

For the second time this year we're plunged into the boisterous tumult of an Anatolian wedding: the ululating women, the raucous shawm-and-drum music, the young men's stamping line-dance. And, as in Reis Celik's *Night of Silence*, what's going on behind the scenes is rather less celebratory. In that film, it was the arranged marriage between a 13-year-old girl and a 60-year-old ex-jailbird. In Austrian-Kurdish director Umut Dag's debut feature *Kuma* we have another age mismatch, though it's not quite so extreme: the innocent 19-year-old Ayse (Begüm Akkaya) and the elderly paterfamilias Mustafa (Vedat Erincin). But the wedding we're shown is a sham. Ayse is apparently being married to Hasan (Murathan Muslu), Mustafa's handsome young son. Only when the family take her from Anatolia back to Vienna do we learn that she's intended as a *kuma* (second wife) for Mustafa, whose first wife Fatma (Nihal Koldas) is seriously ill.

Though Ayse's is the title role (played by Akkaya with sweetly appealing delicacy), the household's dominant figure is Fatma – all the more so after a surprise twist midway through the film. A warm, nurturing figure but rigidly traditional in her outlook, it's Fatma who arranges the fake marriage to provide someone to look after her family if she should die. "Turkish society," as Dag notes, "places more emphasis than others on outward appearances," especially in a foreign country. We see few native Austrians but we're always aware of the non-Turkish, non-Muslim society that surrounds this immigrant enclave – not least the way some family members switch fluently between Turkish and German.

The film's Asian-set prologue ends on a high-angle shot of the Anatolian mountains, brown and bare, stretching into the far distance – from whose austere expanses we cut to the confines of the family's Vienna apartment, its corridor claustrophobia emphasised by



The decoy bride: Nihal Koldas, Begüm Akkaya

the wide-screen format. Petra Ladinigg's sharp script creates a stifling sense of a judgemental, rumour-rife community, heavy with repression and unspoken secrets; even in the local halal food store, the only other venue we visit at any length, it seems that malicious gossip rather than commerce is the prime activity.

The culture-clash contradictions show most clearly in the two older sisters, Kezban and Nurcan, who displace their resentment of their controlling mother into vindictive treatment of Ayse. Both speak fluent German, which they flaunt, using it as a secret language in her presence; but when she's caught having sex with a work colleague they readily invoke traditional values and demand she be sent back to Anatolia for having 'brought shame' on the family.

Deploying a cast of mainly non-professionals, Dag draws fluent, vividly convincing performances from his whole ensemble – and especially from theatre veteran Koldas, as a woman in whom regard for appearance always trumps her kinder instincts, and from newcomer Akkaya in only her second feature. The expressive play of emotions across Ayse's face as her initial docility shades into something more wary and conflicted lies at the heart of this complex film. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Veit Heiduschka
Michael Katz
Screenplay
Petra Ladinigg
Based on a story
by Umut Dag
Director of Photography
Carsten Thiele
Editor
Claudia Linzer
Production Designer
Katrin Huber
Music
Iva Zabkar
Sound
Sergey Martynyuk
Costume Designer
Cinzia Cioffi

Abkommen,
Filmstandort Austria
A film by Umut Dag
With the support
of Babylon

Cast
Nihal Koldas
Fatma
Begüm Akkaya
Ayse
Vedat Erincin
Mustafa
Murathan Muslu
Hasan
Alev Irmak
Kezban
Dilara Karabayir
Nurcan
Merve Cervik
Elmaz
Abdulkadir Gümüş
Mehmet
Ali Yıldırım
Soner
Ilkay Kayku
Serife
Aliye Esra Salepci
Gülen
Elif Dag
Aunt Vildan

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Peccadillo
Pictures Ltd

@Wega Film
Production Companies
Veit Heiduschka/
Michael Katz
presents a Wega
Film production
Produced with the support
of Österreichisches
Filminstitut, ORF
Film/Fernseh-

A village in Anatolia, present day. Ayse, a pretty, shy girl, marries Hasan, a good-looking young man, but the marriage isn't consummated before she travels with Hasan and his family to their home in Vienna. When she arrives there it's evident that the marriage was a sham to avoid Austrian laws against polygamy. Ayse is to become second wife to Hasan's father Mustafa, whose wife Fatma is ill with cancer. The couple treat Ayse with affection, and her gentle nature wins over their teenage daughter Elmaz and young son Mehmet. But she's treated with hostility by the two elder daughters, Kezban (whose husband beats her) and Nurcan. Ayse becomes pregnant. Fatma, now very sick, goes into hospital for an operation; however, she makes a full recovery, and it's Mustafa who suddenly dies.

To support the family, Ayse – who has been teaching herself German – gets a job shelf-stacking at the local Turkish-owned supermarket, while Fatma looks after the baby. Ayse makes a tentative approach to Hasan, but he confides that he's gay. At the supermarket, fellow worker Osman is attracted to Ayse; she's also drawn to him, and they have sex after closing time. On a subsequent occasion they're caught in flagrante by Fatma and the rest of the family. Fatma drags Ayse home by her hair and beats her. Kezban and Nurcan demand that Ayse be sent home to Turkey with her baby, but Hasan asserts himself and overrules them. One by one the family are reconciled to Ayse, Fatma last of all.

The Lone Ranger

USA 2013
Director: Gore Verbinski
Certificate 12A 149m 21s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

The most resonant image in *The Lone Ranger* is Johnny Depp lazily kicking a dead horse. Reunited for a fifth time with director Gore Verbinski – who is on pace to replace Tim Burton as the star's preferred auteur-for-hire by 2025 – Depp gamely stylises himself into a live-action cartoon character: cast as Tonto, the faithful Comanche companion to the titular western crusader (Armie Hammer), the actor cuts a stoic yet comically wobbly figure. But a decade after the first *Pirates of the Caribbean*, the novelty of seeing a megastar pratfalling all over the place has disappeared, replaced by a sense of rote obligation.

One of the reasons it's difficult to care about *The Lone Ranger* is that it doesn't seem to care much about the Lone Ranger. Introduced accidentally tossing a little girl's doll out of a train window, Hammer's John Reid is a dully gallant doofus who is mostly clueless about how to battle the gun-toting bad men infesting his one-horse Texas hometown. The joke seems to be that Tonto, a muttering mystic with a tomahawk to grind against the railroad men encroaching on Indian territory (including a moustache-twirling Tom Wilkinson), is the real hero, with Reid simply along for the ride. The opening action set piece, in which the pair find themselves inconveniently shackled together during a high-speed locomotive heist, visualises this dynamic, as Tonto literally drags Reid around as dead weight.

This clever homage to *The Defiant Ones* notwithstanding, *The Lone Ranger* mostly bungles its cinematic allusions. A scene in which some heavy artillery borrowed from *The Wild Bunch* is used to mow down scores of Tonto's Comanche kinsmen in mournful slow-motion is sanctimonious in the extreme – an attempt to bring some historical gravitas to a mega-budget production otherwise committed to weightless entertainment. Elsewhere, Verbinski



Uneasy riders: Armie Hammer, Johnny Depp

seems confused about whether he's making *Wild Wild West* or *True Grit*, toggling between goofy comedy and too-grotesque violence (William Fichtner's snaggle-toothed villain cuts the heart out of one unlucky victim).

The frequent lapses in tone are only exacerbated by the bloated running time: as in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* sequels, Verbinski is hell-bent on making an epic out of what is at heart Saturday-afternoon-serial material. It's telling that the best parts of *The Lone Ranger* – the surreal, peyote-flavoured interludes where Tonto and Reid swap ghost stories and face down malevolent carnivorous bunnies – feel lifted from Verbinski's last and best movie, *Rango* (2011). That underrated CGI farce was the perfect showcase for the director's slapstick sensibility and cheerful cinephilia (its plot and imagery were lifted from *Chinatown*), and it gave Depp his wryest role in years: a chameleon who yearns to be an actor. In *The Lone Ranger*, the actor is trying once again to be a chameleon, except that he's now too famous to blend in. It's hard to hide in a role when you're billed above the title. **S**

Lovelace

USA 2013
Directors: Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman
Certificate 18 92m 54s

See industry section, page 12

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Any film about 1970s porn is inevitably made in the shadow of *Boogie Nights*, Paul Thomas Anderson's nuanced 1997 tragicomedy about sexual liberation and its discontents. Documentarists Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman have wisely not attempted to rival the scope of Anderson's film in this quirky biopic of *Deep Throat* star Linda Boreman, aka Linda Lovelace, instead choosing to focus tightly on her journey from small-town innocent to skinflick superstar. Rivetingly portrayed by Amanda Seyfried, the enigmatic character of Linda rolls up all the promised pleasures and potential pitfalls of the sexual revolution into one doe-eyed package. Yet we are not given a single, conflicted Linda Boreman/Lovelace, but two incompatible versions of her story.

The directors work this double-perspective trick with a mid-film rewind which replays all the events so far from another perspective. In the first version, Linda is a happy convert to the cause of letting it all hang out; her husband Chuck Traynor (Peter Sarsgaard) is so proud of her skill at oral sex that he can't wait to share her with the world, introducing her to porn director Gerry Damiano (Hank Azaria). His dream is to make high-quality porn films with scripts and proper production values, and he realises that he has found his leading lady in Linda. The resulting film is a huge hit; it makes Linda a star and ushers in an era when porn stops being seedy and borrows some red-carpet glamour from the mainstream.

When the film goes back to the beginning to tell the story again, though, the picture is much darker: Chuck is a violent drug addict who rapes, exploits and coerces his wife, and Linda's apparently willing complicity has been enforced by threats and constant surveillance of her every move. Technically, the directors pull this trick off with aplomb, allowing earlier incidental details to resonate bitterly later, and using carefully placed edits to keep the audience thinking about what they've witnessed, or think they've witnessed, before. It's important to note, though, that the truth is not placed in a grey area here; as if to underline the point, Linda's darker version is introduced via the conceit of a lie-detector, with the examiner asking her questions about her horrific experiences and finally declaring that she has passed the test. The directors are clearly not making a point about ambiguity: they want us to know that they are turning over a pretty-looking rock to reveal the creepy-crawlies underneath. Why, then, do they pull their punches when it comes to the campaign that defined Linda Boreman's later life?

For 21st-century porn consumers the film would be pretty tame stuff, but retro connoisseurs who have heard of *Deep Throat* and Linda Lovelace will probably also know that she spent years campaigning on feminist issues, talking about domestic violence and condemning all permutations of the pornography business *en bloc*. Epstein and Friedman have decided not to follow her lead on this latter issue, despite the scenes of harrowing abuse they delineate in their portrait of her husband Chuck. A

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jerry Bruckheimer
Gore Verbinski

Screenplay

Justin Haythe
Ted Elliott

Director of Photography

Bojan Bazelli

Edited by

Craig Wood
James Haygood

Production Designer

Jess Conchor
Crash McCreery

Music

Hans Zimmer
Sound Mixer

Costume Designer

Penny Rose
Visual Effects

& Animation

Industrial Light & Magic
Visual Effects

MPC

Smoke Donkey VFX
Stunt Co-ordinator

Harper

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Production Companies

Walt Disney Pictures and Jerry Bruckheimer Films

present a Blind Wink/Infinitum

Nihil production A Gore Verbinski film

Executive Producers

Mike Stenson
Chad Oman

Ted Elliott
Terry Rossio

Johnny Depp
Eric Ellenbogen

Eric McLeod

Cast

Johnny Depp
Tonto

Armie Hammer
John Reid, 'The Lone Ranger'

Tom Wilkinson
Latham Cole

William Fichtner
Butch Cavendish

Barry Pepper

Captain Jay Fuller
James Badge Dale

Dan Reid
Ruth Wilson

Rebecca Reid
Helena Bonham Carter

Red Harrington
Leon Rippy

Collins
Stephen Root

Habberman
Matt O'Leary

Skinny
James Frain

Barret
Joaquin Cosio

Jesus
Damon Herriman

Ray
Harry Treadaway

Frank

Dolby Digital/ Datasat

In Colour
Prints by

DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

Distributor

Buena Vista
International (UK)

13,441 ft +8 frames

San Francisco, 1933. A young boy visiting a Wild West show is startled when a mannequin comes to life and claims to be Tonto – the sidekick of the famed western hero known as the Lone Ranger, aka John Reid. He proceeds to recount the story of his experiences riding alongside Reid.

Sixty-five years earlier. After Reid inadvertently foils Tonto's attempt to assassinate the notorious outlaw Butch Cavendish – who is being transported to Colby, Texas, to be hung for his crimes – he makes a citizen's arrest and has him locked up in the county jail. Reid then joins his brother Dan, a decorated Texas Ranger, in a posse to track down the escaped Cavendish. The Reids and their party are ambushed by Cavendish's men and all but John are killed; Tonto stumbles across Reid lying in the desert and, believing him to be a 'spirit walker' of Comanche prophecy, nurses him back to health. After a series of adventures in Indian territory (during which it is revealed that Tonto is an outcast from his tribe), the two travel to Colby to battle Cavendish, who turns out to be allied with the unscrupulous railroad tycoon Latham Cole. Disillusioned by the corruption around him, Reid embraces his status as a mysterious masked outlaw and becomes the Lone Ranger, saving the day (and his widowed sister-in-law Rebecca and her young son). Reid and Tonto ride away to begin their careers as crime-fighters.

His tale concluded, the elderly Comanche departs as the boy eagerly puts on his own dime-store mask.



Sex, lies and videotape: Peter Sarsgaard, Amanda Seyfried

← wife-beating psychopath is the problem; porn itself is never revealed to be anything other than a rather nurturing and easygoing lifestyle choice. Azaria plays Damiano as a sweet uncle who treats Linda with kid gloves, and in the first half of the film the audience happily chuckles along with him as he coddles his gifted little princess. But whereas everything else gets rebooted after Linda liberates herself, there's no corrective to this cosy picture in the second half – the blame for Linda's years of suffering never touches the men who profited from her exploitation. Instead, somewhat disturbingly, a large chunk of mud sticks to Linda's mother Dorothy, played with savage conviction by Sharon Stone. Cold and controlling, this monster tells her bruised and tearful daughter that she must return to her husband and do as he says – because God wills it. A chilling

moment – especially when you suddenly realise that the real boo-hiss villain in a film about porn turns out to be the oldest scapegoat in the book... an unloveable middle-aged woman.

Of course this is a biopic and not a documentary. The directors can't be blamed for smoothing out the bumps in Linda Boreman's story, and they've succeeded in making an entertaining film which nods to the politics of 'porn chic'. The real Boreman was surely more complicated and self-contradictory than either of the two versions juxtaposed here, but Epstein and Friedman have at least invited us to consider the friction between conflicting points of view. Still, it's interesting to consider whether this film could have been made at all if it took seriously Boreman's later radical position. More than 40 years after it was made, are we ready to hear that *Deep Throat* documented a woman being raped?

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jason Weinberg
Jim Young
Heidi Jo Markel
Laura Rister
Written by
Andy Bellin
Inspired by the
life story of Linda
Marchiano and
Catherine A.
MacKinnon
**Director of
Photography**
Eric Edwards
Edited by

Robert Dalva
Matthew Landon
Production Designer
William Arnold
Music
Stephen Trask
Sound Mixer
Steve Morrow
Costume Designer
Karyn Wagner

@Lovelace
Productions, Inc.
**Production
Companies**
Millennium Films

presents an Eclectic
Pictures production
in association
with Untitled
Entertainment,
Animus Films and
Telling Pictures
A Rob Epstein/Jeffrey
Friedman film
Executive Producers
John Thompson
Mark Gill
Merritt Johnson
Avi Lerner
Danny Dimbort
Trevor Short

Boaz Davidson
Amanda Seyfried
Peter Sarsgaard

Cast
Amanda Seyfried
Linda Boreman,
'Linda Lovelace'
Peter Sarsgaard
Chuck Traynor
Hank Azaria
Gerry Damiano
Wes Bentley
Thomas
Adam Brody

Harry Reems
Bobby Cannavale
Butchie Perrino
James Franco
Hugh Hefner
Debi Mazar
Dolly
Chris Noth
Anthony Romano
Robert Patrick
John Boreman
Eric Roberts
Nat Laurendi
Chloë Sevigny
feminist journalist
Sharon Stone

Dorothy Boreman
Juno Temple
Patsy

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

8,361 ft +0 frames

Florida, the 1970s. Linda Boreman, a shy girl living with her strict and religious parents, meets strip-club owner Chuck Traynor at a party. He is a dope-smoking rebel, older than she is, and she falls in love with him. He is charming and considerate, and when Linda falls out with her parents, she leaves home and marries him. He has debt problems, so she agrees to audition for a porn film; the result, 'Deep Throat', is a crossover hit which makes her a star. However, Chuck's behaviour becomes increasingly controlling and Linda finally leaves him. As she retells her story at a publishing

house interested in her memoirs, the film rewinds to replay crucial scenes, revealing that Linda's relationship with Chuck was abusive from the start. His drug-taking, violence and sexual exploitation have kept her under his control; her mother was unwilling to help when Linda turned to her. Chuck's abuse culminates in him allowing a group of men to gang-rape Linda, and she turns to 'Deep Throat's' gangster-backed producers to help her escape from him.

Finally free and happily remarried, she embarks on a book tour, campaigning against domestic abuse.

More Than Honey

Germany/Austria/Switzerland 2012
Director: Markus Imhoof

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

Most of us know that bees are in some sort of trouble – the problem is that they're in *all kinds* of trouble. Markus Imhoof's languorous, contemplative study of bees and beekeepers allows us to bask comfortably in the traditional harmonies of our ancient relationship with these useful insects before hitting us with a litany of their ills: highly contagious bacterial infections disrupt their broods, varroa mites infest them and drink their blood, intestinal parasites eat them from the inside and viruses cause colonies to collapse. And all the time our own interventions weaken their defences – whether it's the fungicides that farmers use on crops during the pollination season or the unnaturally intensive husbandry necessary to exploit their instinctive behaviour to fit our own agenda.

The film opens with the lone figure of Fred Jaggi, a grizzled old beekeeper hiking through an idyllic Alpine meadow in search of a lost swarm. He leans a wooden ladder against a tree and dislodges the buzzing clump into a bucket before carrying them home to his hives. He doesn't wear protective clothing or use any complicated equipment, and he makes a point of preserving the local black bee breed rather than switching to any of the fancy new varieties other keepers now prefer. Imhoof contrasts this homely picture with the hardnosed commercial imperatives of proud capitalist John Miller, who lives by a bald equation: trees plus bees equals money. Since there are no native American honey bees, crop pollination has always been artificially managed in the US, and Miller's industrial-scale outfit is the outcome. He and his half-billion bees travel across the country pollinating crops as the seasons change, then settle in North Dakota for the summer to make honey. But though he observes wistfully that his father's heart would break to see how little affection and dignity there is in modern beekeeping, Miller isn't presented as the villain of the piece. Imhoof's film is too subtle to draw such crass conclusions.

If the bees' problems are complex, so is our relationship with them. A trip to China to see migrant workers hand-pollinating trees proves how absurd and laborious agriculture would become if the rest of the world followed their example and allowed indiscriminate pesticide use to wipe out most of the bees. But as the ruminative narration (voiced in the English version by John Hurt) suggests, we do harm to the bees even when we're not engaging in acts of boorish stupidity. By selectively breeding gentle bees to live in our midst, humanity has, in effect, turned wolves into sickly, inbred poodles.

Out of this gloom strides a new hero: Arizona beeman Fred Terry, who champions killer bees as the saviours of mankind. This aggressive strain started as a scientific experiment gone wrong – a genetic mixture of European and African bees that escaped from a Brazilian laboratory and went north – but their hybrid vigour lets them shrug off infection, pollution and stress. They also, in fact, pollinate crops well and make good honey. Yet they are wild creatures and not to be messed with. Not for Terry the casually intimate relationship that Jaggi enjoys with his hives – but not the blind adherence to genetic purity either.

Museum Hours

Austria/USA 2012
Director: Jem Cohen

See Feature
on page 48

Reviewed by Isabel Stevens

Jem Cohen is a street filmmaker who, like the pavement scavenger in his 1996 short *Lost Book Found*, collects overlooked and abandoned objects, scraps and corners of the city. Glimpsed for just a second with his static 16mm or super 8 camera, these moments are edited with a photographer's eye for juxtapositions, into something that falls between film, photobook and stream of consciousness. With their fragmented views, intimate voiceovers and idiosyncratic credits sequences, which thank buskers or footnote books to read, his films resemble diaries rather than slick city symphonies. Yet with only four of his 54 films fitting the feature mould, and these rarely receiving theatrical releases, he remains one of cinema's outsiders. His restless filmography encompasses newsreels, city portraits, studies of musicians and artists, travelogues and installations but regardless of the format, Cohen only has eyes for the ordinary as he wanders edgelands and forlorn, anonymous public spaces, delighting in pockets of lyricism when corporate homogeneity stumbles.

Unnoticed outliers and fugitives who look sideways on the world are often the protagonists of his documentary-fiction hybrids and *Museum Hours* is no different, filtered through the gaze of the invisible security guard Johann in Vienna's grand Kunsthistorisches Museum. Reflecting on its collection, as well as its visitors and their viewing habits in his spare, lucid voiceover, Johann is in many ways a kindred spirit of Amanda, the itinerant cleaner in Cohen's previous narrative-tinged feature *Chain*, who observes malls like a kind of human surveillance camera. *Chain* mourned these anonymous hinterlands and their debt-ridden, numb denizens (and prophetically did so four years before the economic crash) and the same hypnotic atmosphere shrouds *Museum Hours* as Cohen roves between close-ups of artworks and the possessed faces of onlookers. But this is a far more hopeful film, revealing the joy and solace that can be found from hours spent looking at art.

It is also many things besides: a tale about the brief but tender friendship between two strangers – Johann and Canadian tourist Anne, adrift in the city while visiting her cousin who lies in coma; a tour of Vienna's grey streets, neglected architecture and statues; a homage to museums; a plea for imaginative interpretations of art. And yet it aims higher still, taking in art's relation to life. As Cohen follows Johann and Anne around the museum and the city, the two places intermingle; just as Cohen took Vivaldi out on to the snowy streets of New York in his 1996 short *Winter Movement (Four Seasons)* – in which pedestrians read aloud the composer's notes – in *Museum Hours*, in an even more ambitious gesture, the faces of passers-by are contrasted with distinguished portraits, while eggshells found at the edges of a still life are then seen among cigarette stubs, a lost glove and other pavement detritus. For a filmmaker who counts paintings and photographers as his primary influences and who has always had a crooked take on reality,



Street art: Bobby Sommer

this is possibly his most autobiographical film yet, one that reveals as much about his stance on the world as it does about the art it surveys.

Cohen though never allows Johann and Anne's relationship to be a contrived framing device for loftier, conceptual ponderings. Non-professionals Bobby Sommer and Mary Margaret O'Hara each play loosely fictionalised versions of themselves, their meandering conversations revealing the odds and ends of their lives, with Cohen's ear for the pace and pauses of dialogue keeping their exchanges spontaneous. Emotion is often considered the enemy by experimental filmmakers, but Cohen's films depend on it. Anne's strange, lonely predicament as the last relative left to come and talk to an unconscious cousin she lost touch with years ago and her sense of grief at how time has slipped by, is acutely sketched with memories told to Johann, but most devastatingly in sad but entirely unsentimental close-ups of Janet's body and the cold hospital apparatus.

Johann's thoughts, meanwhile, thread the film together. As he notes the paintings that awaken bored teenagers, the questions about value that visitors pose, his unfussy and idiosyncratic observations become a leftfield museum soundtrack, floating over Cohen's inventory of the collection, an oneiric slideshow that proffers suggestions and associations over a definitive interpretation. Artworks flash past, rarely seen in their full, iconic glory (when Cohen pulls back, it's to watch a visitor take a photograph and the top of the painting is lopped off). Their makers too mostly go uncredited. Pieter Bruegel the Elder is the exception, the subject of a 10-minute talk from a curator, a digression that slips naturally into the middle of the film. Bruegel, one suspects, is Cohen's hero. The works of the Flemish Renaissance master have been used as shorthand for impending doom or outright terror in the movies (see Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* or William Raban's *Thames Film*), but Cohen is more interested in the painter's prowess as a documentarian, noting everyday moments rather than gory drama and positing how the small sights of a



Honey, I shrunk the bees: *More Than Honey*

In *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), Michael Moore raised eyebrows by citing America's fear of the 'Africanised' killer bee as symbolic of the country's inherently racist fear of invasion. Now this point has come full circle: instead of using bees to explain the problem of racism, Imhoof's film uses racism to explain the problem of bees. Terry's view that anti-killer-bee sentiment is rooted in America's insularity reminds us that Jaggi's Alpine paradise is an artificially maintained genetic desert, where any racially impure bee is unceremoniously exterminated.

Imhoof doesn't draw overt political conclusions from this disquieting parallel; Jaggi is still a sweet old man, not some genocidal eugenicist. The charm of this film lies in its combination of compassion and quiet suggestiveness – and in its optimism that big science and globalisation, supposed enemies of the natural order, may yet be the key to our survival. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Thomas Kufus
Helmut Grasser
Pierre-Alain Meier

Written by

Markus Imhoof

Director of

Photography

Jörg Jeshel

Microcamera

Attila Boa

Editor

Anne Fabini

Music

Peter Scherer

Sound

Dieter Meyer

©Zero One Film,
Allegro Film, Thelma
Film & Ormenis Film

Production

Companies

A production by Zero
One Film, Allegro
Film, Thelma Film
& Ormenis Film
In co-production with
SRF Schweizer Radio

und Fernsehen / SSR

SRG, Bayerischer
Rundfunk
With the support
of Bundesamt
für Kulture

(EDI), Schweiz,
Filmförderung-
sanstalt,

FilmFernsehFonds
Bayern, Deutscher
Filmförderfonds,

Österreichisches
Filminstitut,
Filmfonds Wien,

ORF Film/Fernseh-
Abkommen,
Eurimages and the

MEDIA-Programm
der Europäischen
Union,

Kulturfonds
Suisseimage,
Fonds Régio Films
with the Loterie

Romande and the
Canton of Jura,
Aargauer

Kuratorium, George

Foundation, G+B

Schwyzer-Stiftung,
Bundesamt für
Umwelt (BAFU),

Ernst Göhner
Stiftung, Zürcher
Filmstiftung,

Succès Cinéma,
Succès Passage
Antenne, Fredi M.

Murer, Frenetic Films

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Eureka
Entertainment

In Switzerland, Fred Jaggi keeps an ancient breed of black bees, using traditional methods and keeping his hives genetically pure. In the US, John Miller takes millions of bees around the country on trucks to pollinate crops. In China, farmers employ migrant workers to pollinate cherry trees by hand. They all face the same problem: bees are getting sick. Infections, pollution, parasites and stress all cause colonies to collapse. In Arizona, Fred Terry believes that he has an answer: wild killer bees, which are much harder than other bees. In Australia, which is still free of infection, new colonies of more genetically diverse bees are being bred to replenish populations in other parts of the world.

child soldier or a man relieving himself have just as much claim to be regarded as the artwork's centre as the conversion of St. Paul or the Tower of Babel around them.

Carried by Johann's musing and the recorded babble of a museum audio-guide, gradually the film and the gallery drift out onto Vienna's wintry streets and soon there is no distinction between the two. Cohen's compositions echo the paintings: a Bruegelian glimpse of a bird framed by branches; a spectacular underground grotto sequence that recalls Rembrandt's treatment of light and darkness. In a twist on Duchamp's conceptual prank of bringing a urinal into the hallowed gallery space, Cohen turns his democratic gaze on fellow drinkers, toilet signs and photos on bar walls, in a way that makes them as worthy for contemplation as the images on the museum's walls.

By the film's epilogue, the museum is left behind and Cohen's shots of cranes, a tombstone shop and a silhouetted old lady walking away from us now become the landscapes we peer into as Cohen surrounds them with a black frame. Transience, another subject buried in his film, now surfaces. It's perfectly encapsulated in his final images of junk-shop wares but now we realise it's been there all along, in the *memento mori* Cohen gathers from the streets, in the sad, knowing eye looming out of the darkness that he singles out from a self-portrait, as well as the jangling hangers left in Anne's wardrobe as she leaves the city and Johann behind. And, of course, it's always been there in Cohen's signature, in the procession of images that glides past and then disappears. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Paolo Calarmita
Jem Cohen
Gabriele
Kranzelbinder

Written by

Jem Cohen

Additional Dialogue

Mary Margaret

O'Hara

Bobby Sommer

Cinematography

Jem Cohen

Peter Roehsler

Edit

Jem Cohen

Marc Vives

Sound

Bruno Pisek

Cast

Little Magnet,

Gravity Hill, KGP

Production

Companies

Little Magnet Films,

Gravity Hill, KGP

Kranzelbinder

Gabriele Production

present a film by

Jem Cohen

Executive

Producers

Guy Picciotto

Patti Smith

Cast

Mary Margaret

O'Hara

Anne

Bobby Sommer

Johann

Ela Piipits

Gerda, visiting

lecturer

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Soda Pictures

Present day, Vienna. Johann, a guard at the city's Kunsthistorisches Museum, meets Canadian tourist Anne. She is visiting her estranged cousin Janet, who is in a coma in the city's hospital. Gradually the two strike up a friendship as Johann shows the lonely Anne around the city and accompanies her to the hospital.

In a voiceover, Johann discusses visitors' viewing habits and his impressions of the artworks, while the film details sculptures and paintings in the museum's collections as well as people looking at them. A museum tour takes place on the Flemish artist Bruegel, which points out many little-noticed elements of his paintings. Anne receives the news that Janet has died. She goes out to a bar with Johann and leaves the city the next morning. Johann reflects on images of the city as if they were landscape paintings.

Only God Forgives

Denmark/France/USA 2012

Director: Nicolas Winding Refn

Certificate 18 90m Os



Family affair: Ryan Gosling

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Only God Forgives is a movie with a serious cool complex – in fact, despite its portentous bearing, that's the only serious thing about it.

Introducing the movie at the Brooklyn screening I attended, 42-year-old director Nicolas Winding Refn told the packed house that he'd "gotten into drugs late in life", and that while his *Drive* was good coke, *Only God Forgives* was an acid movie. There's nothing in this to discredit the film. What discredits it is how the same self-satisfied naughty-little-boy smile with which Refn announced this piece of news is visible behind almost every frame, as every shot seems to beg for *True Romance*'s mantra of approbation: "You're so cool. You're so cool. You're so cool." "Try softer," I wanted to shout.

The star of *Drive*, Ryan Gosling, returns as Julian, the damaged youngest of the Thompson clan, who runs a Muay Thai gym in Bangkok with his brother Billy. As in *Drive*, Refn has given Gosling a character with all the taciturnity of a Walter Hill protagonist, though Gosling never suggests the sense of a patient, hidden intelligence biding time. This would appear

to be a deliberate choice here, for mommy's boy Julian is a bit slow – and not just in the measured, metronomic pace with which he and everyone in Bangkok go about their business.

Perhaps it's the invisible umbilical cord still wrapped around Julian's neck that's interfering with his higher functions? When Julian awkwardly blurts, "I want you to meet my mother" to the Thai prostitute he's been seeing (Rhatha Phongam), the audience burst into full-throated laughs. Was Refn having us on? Was this a comedy? Any doubt seems dispelled when the couple sit down to dinner with Kristin Scott Thomas's domineering mother, a peroxide-and-haute-couture ex-mob wife prone to praising the girth of her late son's manhood, commanding her youngest to patricide and dropping phrases like "cum dumpster" and "yellow nigger" in her scabrous, Tourette's monologues.

The movie at least has friction when working in the comic register; its version of tragedy is simply dull and dour, the maladroit handling of the family drama propped up by a corseted style. In copious close-ups, Gosling bats his woebegone basset-hound eyes, while Refn and DoP Larry

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Lene Børglum
Sidonie Dumas
Vincent Maraval

Written by

Nicolas Winding Refn

Director of

Photography

Larry Smith

Editor

Matthew Newman

Production Designer

Beth Mickle

Music

Cliff Martinez

Sound Designers

Kristian Selin
Eidnes Andersen
Eddie Simonsen
Costume Designer
Wasitchaya
'Nampeung'
Mochanakul

@Space Rocket
Nation/Gaumont
& Wild Bunch

Production

Companies

Gaumont, Wild Bunch,

Nicolas Winding Refn

present a film by

Nicolas Winding Refn
A Space Rocket
Nation/Motel
Movies production
in association
with Bold Films
in co-production with
Film i Väst, DR v/
Filmklubben, Nordisk
Film Shortcut A/S
with the support
of The Danish Film
Institute, Nordisk
Film & TV Fond, The
Media Programme of
the European Union

Executive Producers

Ryan Gosling

Christophe Riandee

Brahim Chioua

Tom Quinn

Jason Janego

Michel Litvak

David Lancaster

Gary Michael Walters

Matthew Read

Thor Sigurjonsson

Cast

Ryan Gosling

Julian

Kristin Scott

Thomas

Crystal

Vithaya Pansringarm

Chang, 'the Angel

of Vengeance'

Rhatha Phongam

Mai

Gordon Brown

Gordon

Tom Burke

Billy

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Lionsgate UK

8,100 ft +0 frames

Bangkok, present day. Expat American brothers Julian and Billy Thompson run a Muay Thai gym together. One night, after one of their fighters has a successful bout, Billy goes out to celebrate by having sex with an underage prostitute, whom he kills. The police arrive, headed by Lieutenant Chang, who allows the girl's father/pimp Choi to exact his revenge on Billy, killing him. Chang then severs Choi's arm, though this doesn't satisfy Julian and Billy's mother Crystal,

who arrives in Bangkok and demands that Julian avenge his brother. When Julian refuses, Crystal puts out a hit on the maimed Choi; this sets Chang on the Thompsons' trail. Chang goes to the gym and bests Julian in a fight. Julian goes to Chang's home seeking revenge but can't bring himself to kill the lieutenant's young daughter. Chang kills Crystal in her hotel suite. When Julian arrives, Chang lops off his hands, then retires to his favourite karaoke bar.

Pacific Rim

USA 2013
Director: Guillermo del Toro
Certificate 12A 131m 6s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

In a long narrated prologue, *Pacific Rim* gives a précis of what might have been an entire series of films, in which coastal cities around the Pacific are attacked by huge monster specimens, or 'Kaiju'. The planet's defence forces prove valiantly unable to cope – leading to the creation of giant, humanoid fighting machines. This might be fresh to western audiences, though Stuart Gordon's *Robot Jox* (1989) also featured piloted anthropomorphic combatants (not strictly robots but 'mechas'), and the *Iron Man* movies have familiarised multiplexes with the notion of an armoured battlesuit. However, Japan has been spinning variations on this premise for decades, whether in live-action movies pitting famous monsters against mecha-doppelgangers (1967's *King Kong Escapes*, 1974's *Godzilla vs MechaGodzilla*), in which at least initially the flesh-and-blood monsters were the goodies and the metal imitations controlled by wicked aliens or earthly villains, or in anime series like *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995–56).

There's no denying that *Pacific Rim* delivers the awesome. Guillermo del Toro is a far better filmmaker than others who have essayed large-scale 3D devastation, such as Michael Bay in the *Transformers* films and Zack Snyder in *Man of Steel*. Del Toro is known for straddling Spanish-language arthouse fantasy cinema (*The Devil's Backbone*, *Pan's Labyrinth*) and off-Hollywood edgy comics material (the *Hellboy* films, *Blade II*), as well as for his attachment to more unmade, cult-friendly projects than any other filmmaker of his generation (he comes to this after the collapse of his big-budget H.P. Lovecraft dream project, *At the Mountains of Madness*). A director of taste and sensitivity, he is also a giant super-fan – when a particular *Pacific Rim* 'knifehead' Kaiju looks like a biologically credible redesign of Gamera, the monster that fought heroic flying turtle Gamera in Dai-ichi Studios' rival to Toho's *Godzilla* series, you can be sure it's a deliberate homage. Anyone who's ever loved daffy pictures like

Gamera tai daiakuju Giron (*Attack of the Monsters*, 1969) – in which stuntmen in baggy monster suits sumo-wrestle in the middle of miniature cities – and wanted to see a photorealistic version of their set pieces will be stirred by the way that del Toro realises Kaiju (strictly, *daikaiju* – giant monster) battles here. Corrosive glowing blue monster spittle eats away the head-carapace of a mecha or the side of a skyscraper; a flashback to one character's encounter with a monster in the ruins of Tokyo gives a child's perspective on the typical Godzilla rampage in a manner that trounces Roland Emmerich's pompous 1998 *Godzilla* reboot; and we follow the devastating effect of a single blow which ploughs through an office block wrecking all in its path until its last spent force sets off a desktop Newton's cradle.

In action, the film is breathtaking, but as a whole it suffers from a relative lack of ambition. The invaders' motivation – and much else, including an inspirational speech delivered by a rasping Idris Elba ("Today we are cancelling the apocalypse!") – is tipped in from *Independence Day* (1996), and the human characters are either cardboard jocks or irritating nerds. The only human life in the film comes from del Toro regular Ron Perlman as a black marketeer who sells Kaiju body parts for high prices (powdered monster bones are thought to be an aphrodisiac). Eccentric, bizarre but not annoying – unlike the weird boffins played by Charlie Day and Burn Gorman – Perlman's character is also the only real suggestion that the appearance of giant monsters has changed the world in any way (contrast this with the awe and terror of *The Mist* or *Monsters*). Of all the people we could be spending time with during this crisis, did it have to be a selection of *Top Gun* knock-off macho militarists with barely a character trait apiece? Buried deep in the script is the notion that the fighting robots – 'Jaegers' – need to be piloted by two compatible operators who mind-meld – a concept which ought to lead to compelling drama but is badly mishandled, ➔

Smith's penchant for shallow depth of field renders Bangkok as a woozy swarm of colourful blurs, all expressive, one supposes, of a profound spiritual ennui. There is nothing in plotting or performance to give this any dimension beyond mopey vogueing of the lowest order.

Only God Forgives takes place largely in the city at night, encroaching pools of shadow held at bay in spotlit karaoke bars, floodlit restaurants and neon brothels. Of course there is no God in this city, only Lieutenant Chang (Vithaya Pansringarm), a police officer who assumes the role of judge, jury and executioner, distributing justice through a code known only to him. The guilty cannot hide from his impassive, all-knowing glare. No law interferes with the dispensation of his verdict at the end of a *dha* short sword, either through summary execution or a variation on punitive Sharia law, relieving offenders of their offending hands. The casting of Pansringarm, a middle-aged actor who has only been in movies since 2010 but carries genuine gravity, is the film's only really successful gamble, and his one-sided Muay Thai faceoff with Gosling, attacking and strategically debilitating the younger fighter's legs, is far and away its strongest set piece. Watching it, one almost wishes that Refn would do his cover of Walter Hill's *Hard Times* next.

The Hill influence evident in *Drive* has been eclipsed by other stated masters here – *Only God* is dedicated to mystic eccentric Alejandro Jodorowsky, includes a 'thanks' to Gaspar Noé, and flirts with surreal imagery that might be categorised as Lynchian: Julian has visions of a secret beyond a door that falls off into a *Lost Highway* pitch-black; as Lieutenant Chang begins a particularly creative interrogation in a restaurant, he instructs the ladies present to shut their eyes, and so they sit, blind witnesses as eerily silent as idols. Even the naming of the Thompsons brings to mind *The Killer Inside Me* author Jim Thompson. More than anything, though, the film recalls Kitano Takeshi's 2010 film *Outrage*, in which any narrative is transparently a vehicle for a series of increasingly ornate violent 'skits'. The crucial difference is that Kitano has a greater invention and control of his material – it's the difference between deadpan and po-faced.

Yes, Refn's references – that is, his influences – are in order and impeccable, but that only adds to the sense of a stifling deliberation, no room having been left for the free play of imagination. Since the film's contentious in-competition Cannes premiere, Refn has had sufficient time to compose his defence, dubbing it his 'Metal Machine Music' – the reference is to Lou Reed's kiss-off noise album, an unfriendly work custom-made to separate the Johnny-come-lately phonies from the diehards. Nice save. So *Only God* is boxed and shipped as a *film maudit*, something to keep Refn's cachet intact with the fanbase, allowing him to appear to disdain careerism by taking a hard 180 after his biggest popular success, to take a risk. But when 'cool' and 'badass' and 'batshit' are the only criteria that an artwork addresses, where is the danger? This is a work of supreme confidence, a confidence that comes of the filmmaker's unconscious knowledge that he can't really fail because he's set the stakes so low. ☹



Monsters' ball: *Pacific Rim*

building into the very premise of the film a requirement for the lead characters to be so dull that their brain hemispheres can mesh without causing nosebleeds.

Independence Day at least showed a range of stereotypes affected by the alien invasion – and it seems odd that del Toro, so sensitive to the plight of innocents caught between the supernatural and brutal soldiery in his films with Spanish Civil War settings, should deliver something so gung-ho and militaristic. In an era of drone attacks, the notion of giant piloted robots might even be suspect and fascist – at the dawn of the mecha era, the first instinct of the Japanese was to cheer Godzilla against MechaGodzilla – but *Pacific Rim* is a hymn to military showboating that ridicules civilian solutions (building a wall around the sea) and can only conceive of punching or blowing things up as a means of dealing with incursions from another dimension. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Thomas Tull
Jon Jashni
Guillermo del Toro
Mary Parent
Screenplay
Travis Beacham
Guillermo del Toro
Story
Travis Beacham
Director of Photography
Guillermo Navarro
Editors
John Gilroy
Peter Amundson
Production Designers
Andrew Neskoromny
Carol Spier
Music
Ramin Djawadi
Sound Designer/Supervising Sound Editor
Scott Martin
Gershon
Costumes Designed by
Kate Hawley
Visual Effects and Animation
Industrial Light and Magic

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and Legendary
Pictures
Funding, LLC
Production Companies
A Warner Bros.
Pictures and
Legendary Pictures
presentation
A Legendary
Pictures/DDY
production
A Guillermo del
Toro film
Executive Producer
Callum Greene

Cast
Charlie Hunnam
Raleigh Becket
Idris Elba
Stacker Pentecost
Rinko Kikuchi
Mako Mori
Charlie Day
Dr Newton Geiszler
Ron Perlman
Hannibal Chau
Rob Kazinsky
Chuck Hansen
Max Martini
Hercules 'Herc'
Hansen
Clifton Collins Jr
Tendo Choi
Burn Gorman

Dr Herman Gottlieb
Diego Klattenhoff
Yancy Becket

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDDS
Colour by
Technicolor
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

11,799 ft +0 frames

When a rift to another dimension opens at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, giant monsters (Kaiju) rise out of the sea to devastate coastal cities. A multinational defence programme creates giant robots (Jaegers), each of which requires two pilots whose brains are in sync with each other and with the machine. A Jaeger piloted by brothers Raleigh and Yancy Becket is destroyed in a battle with a Kaiju, and Raleigh is traumatised by his brother's death.

Some years later, Marshal Stacker Pentecost persuades Raleigh to return to the Jaeger programme, planning a last-ditch push against the increasing Kaiju menace. Partnered by Mako Mori, who was orphaned by a Kaiju attack on Japan, Raleigh joins a mission to close the rift with a nuclear device. Geiszler, a scientist working on the programme, syncs with the remains of a Kaiju brain and learns how to penetrate the rift. Pentecost and Raleigh's rival, Chuck Hansen, pilot a Jaeger that is sacrificed in a final battle; Raleigh and Mako deliver the bomb to the other dimension, collapsing the rift, and return safely to Earth.

Pieta

Republic of Korea 2012
Director: Kim Ki-duk
Certificate 18 103m 43s



Mother's day: Cho Min-soo

Reviewed by Roger Clarke

Kim Ki-duk's 18th feature, which won the Golden Lion at the 2012 Venice Film Festival, shows a return to formal coherence after the chaos of his last film distributed in the UK, *Arirang* (2011), a documentary in which the director recorded his own nervous breakdown in excruciating detail. Though Kim is capable of religiosity and beauty (*Spring, Summer, Fall,*

Winter... and Spring, 2003) and queasy, alien playfulness (*3-Iron*, 2004), thematically *Pieta* most resembles one of his cruellest films, 2001's *Bad Guy*, a work that cemented his reputation for casual macho misogyny. He's still the lone-wolf mythomane of *Arirang*, and this is business as usual – melodrama peppered with elaborate psychic shocks and extreme violence. Kim's ability to win festival prizes remains undimmed.

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Kim Soon-mo
Written by
Kim Ki-duk
Director of Photography
Jo Yeong-jik
Editing
Kim Ki-duk

Production Designer
Lee Hyun-joo
Music
Park In-young
Sound Design
Lee Seung-yeop
Costume Designer
Ji Ji-yeon

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Production Companies
Kim Ki-duk Film
presents in
association with
Next Entertainment
World a Kim Ki-duk
Film production

Executive Producers
Kim Ki-duk
Kim Woo-taek

Cast
Cho Min-soo
Mi-sun
Lee Jung-jin

Lee Kang-do
Woo Gi Hong
Hoon-chul
Kang Eun Jin
Myung-ja
Jo Jae ryong
Tae-seung
Dolby Digital

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited
9,334ft +8 frames

South Korea, present day. A man in a wheelchair hangs himself. Meanwhile Lee awakes from an erotic dream. He is a loan shark's debt-collector who preys on the poor. In tiny workshops crammed with heavy machinery, he breaks limbs and spines to extract insurance payouts. One day a well-dressed woman comes to his door claiming to be his long-lost mother. He slams the door on her hand but she barges in and begins to do the washing up. She won't be dissuaded by his cruelty and contempt, and stalks him relentlessly. He rapes her. Soon he begins to believe that she is indeed his mother. She

helps him maim one of his victims. One day she vanishes from his apartment, and we see her visiting a lock-up where she seems to be looking at a body in a freezer, sobbing. Lee is convinced that she has been abducted by his boss and becomes mad with worry. Lee's boss fires him. The woman contrives to make him turn up at a half-finished building, throwing herself from it in order to make him suffer at the thought that he has lost his mother. He digs a grave and finds a body wearing the colourful sweater she has been knitting. It is the man who hanged himself. In a final shot, all three lie together in the grave.

Planes

USA 2013
Director: Klay Hall
Certificate U 91m 38s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Originally planned as a DVD-only release, this *Cars* spinoff is produced not by Pixar but by Disney Toon Studios, and directed by Klay Hall a veteran of the pretty if predictable *Tinkerbell* series. It's no cheap-quel, but despite the gorgeous visuals and big-name casting, there's a telltale lack of originality all round. Aimed squarely at a boy audience feeling the need for speed, this tale of an unlikely air-racer taking on the big names is a by-the-numbers aeronautical retooling of the two *Cars* movies, without the visual gags and quick wit of its Pixar parent pictures. However, the older viewer may spot some pleasing *Top Gun* spoofs (Anthony Edwards and Val Kilmer even appear as a pair of spiteful fighter planes).

Despite the immersive possibilities of 3D air-racing, the swooping action sequences soon become far more samey than their road-race counterparts. After a handful of whooshing 360-degree aileron rolls, some first-person-POV aerial slalom and a couple of zoom climbs, you're sated. It's the overkill of *The Fast and the Furious* for the five-and-over set. In a crowded summer for family animated features (DreamWorks' imminent *Turbo* is another little-racer-that-could film), *Planes* looks more like a well-honed merchandising mill than a must-see picture. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Traci Balthazor-Flynn
Written by
Jeffrey M. Howard
Original Story
John Lasseter
Klay Hall
Jeffrey M. Howard

Editor
Jeremy Milton
Art Director
Ryan Carlson
Original Score
Composed by
Mark Mancina
Sound Design/
Supervising
Sound Editors
Todd Toon
Rob Nokes
Animation Director
Sheryl Sardina
Sackett

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Enterprises, Inc.
Production
Company
Produced by
Disneytoon Studios
Executive Producer
John Lasseter

Voice Cast

Dane Cook
Dusty Crophopper
Stacy Keach
Skipper
Brad Garrett
Chug
Teri Hatcher
Dottie
Julia Louis-Dreyfus
Rochelle
Priyanka Chopra
Ishani
John Cleese
Bulldog
Cedric the
Entertainer
Leadbottom
Carlos Alazraqui
El Chupacabra
Roger Craig Smith
Ripslinger
Anthony Edwards
Echo
Val Kilmer
Bravo

Dolby Atmos/
Datasat
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor

Buena Vista
International (UK)

8,247 ft +0 frames

Onscreen title
World of Cars
Planes

Crop-duster plane Dusty enters a famous transglobal air race, though vertigo forces him to fly low. Elderly fighter plane Skipper trains him. While helping his fellow racers, Dusty is often in last place. Glamorous Ishani betrays him, but flying through a train tunnel puts him ahead. Race favourite Ripslinger's wingmen sabotage Dusty. He discovers that Skipper is afraid to fly following a wartime debacle. All the racers contribute parts to get Dusty airborne. In the last leg, Skipper overcomes his phobia to rescue Dusty from Ripslinger's cheating crew. Conquering his vertigo, Dusty flies high to take the winning place from Ripslinger.

RED 2

USA 2013
Director: Dean Parisot
Certificate 12A 115m 42s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

Not since Julie Christie in *Doctor Zhivago* has an actor's performance depended so heavily on hats as John Malkovich in *RED 2*. It's supposed to be a running joke that his dotty ex-secret agent Marvin Boggs is a master of disguise who's incapable of blending in; with each foreign locale he travels to, he busts out a fresh piece of attention-getting headgear.

It's generally a bad sign when the funniest and most exciting thing about an ostensible action-comedy is the wardrobe of one of its main characters, and so it goes with Dean Parisot's altogether gruelling sequel to the surprise 2010 blockbuster about retired black-ops specialists getting their groove back one semi-automatic-weapons burst at a time. While surely no great shakes, the original *RED* (the title means 'Retired, Extremely Dangerous') had the novelty of stuffing a number of well-known actors on the wrong side of middle age into the sort of high-octane shoot-'em-up usually centred around younger and more lithe performers. But where Sylvester Stallone's similarly themed *The Expendables* (2010) played out as a last hurrah for its hard-bodied veteran stars, *RED* was all about the incongruousness of seeing the likes of Helen Mirren and Morgan Freeman in lethal-weapon mode.

The common link between *The Expendables* franchise and the *RED* series is Bruce Willis, who, between these films and the fifth *Die Hard*, must be glumly weary of playing glumly weary heroes: when his character, the former CIA crack shot Frank Moses, grumbles about being drawn into one last escapade, it's the actor's irritation that comes through most strongly. *RED 2* is all about Frank's reluctance to get back to work now that he's playing house with Sarah (Mary-Louise Parker), a fetching goofball who is secretly hoping for a little excitement in their relationship: like *True Lies* (1994), the film suggests that the best pick-me-up for a sagging marriage is killing a few dozen faceless foreign henchmen.

As it's basically impossible to follow the film's twisting plot – something about a biological WMD engineered by a brilliant scientist (Anthony Hopkins) and the efforts of the US and Russian governments to track it down – the only interest lies in trying to decide which actors are having fun and which ones are just slumming it for a pay cheque: suffice it 



Old hands: Parker, Willis, Malkovich

The film begins with a suicide that is not initially explained – a young man in a wheelchair hooks a chain round his neck and hangs himself. In a characteristic Kim segue, we move to another young man in bed, dry-humping through an erotic dream and being woken up by his phone: details of his new assignment. This calm, cold, baby-faced thug is Lee Kang-do (Lee Jung-jin) and he stalks the derelict industrial slums of Cheonggyecheon in Seoul, collecting money for a loan shark. Their particular scam is to get their clients to sign a medical insurance form so that when the loans become due, Lee simply maims them and collects the insurance payout. He does so entirely without pity, often in front of elderly parents and wives, and he is routinely cursed with blood-curdling intensity. He is a devil we're told, with no life to speak of, living in a rundown flat, slaughtering animals for his dinner and throwing the guts on to his bathroom floor. Kim is one of the only directors out there who can show you a rabbit hopping around innocently and make you genuinely fear for its safety.

One day a respectable-looking woman (Cho Min-soo) appears at Lee's front door begging forgiveness for abandoning him as a child; he slams the door on her hand but she doesn't remove it, enduring the pain. For the rest of the film she inveigles her way into his life. It is a drawn-out, unblinking battle of wills: Lee is accustomed to using violence to frighten all into submission yet finds himself constantly outmanoeuvred by this mysterious woman, who just soaks it up with a smile. There's an inevitable rape. He forces her to eat a morsel of flesh he has cut from his side, in a scene not dissimilar to the 'live sashimi' scene – banned by the BBFC – of *The Isle* (2000), the film that first brought Kim international fame. Eventually Lee begins to believe that the woman is indeed his lost mother, at which point this Jacobean-style revenge tragedy begins to form its hideous resolution, and her true identity as an angel of retribution is revealed.

Kim edited and wrote the script and the cinematographer is newcomer Jo Yeong-jik, who brings a sense of claustrophobia to close-up faces in close quarters – often dingy industrial sheds or unappetising apartments. In *Arirang*, Kim built his own espresso machine; here too he draws on his own experience working as a machinist and lathe-operator in his early life.

Music is spare, the palette is drab. Though little violence is actually shown, it still feels somehow observed. Cho brings essential depth as the 'mother', offering presence and some subtlety to a fairly crude scenario, especially in the rape scene. She's not much known to audiences in the West. Lee is a TV star in South Korea, but his role here is not wholly satisfactory; there's never any real sense that this lumbering pretty-boy is physically dangerous.

The title *Pieta* is a Renaissance art-history term referring to images of Mary cradling the dead body of her son Jesus on her lap; it also means, literally, pity. Only a filmmaker as pitiless as Kim Ki-duk would use such a title for such a film and such a story, a title with a smirk, where not a trace of any state of grace exists, or even hopes to exist, in what follows. 

to say that Malkovich and Hopkins, both grandmasters of mercenary thespianism, do the best job of concealing their boredom.

The mid-film entrance of Catherine Zeta-Jones as a Natasha Fatale-style Russkie temptress finally reveals which template the *RED* series is really trying to emulate: Steven Soderbergh's *Ocean's* movies. Except that in lieu of the sly movie-star tomfoolery that marked those movies' best moments, *RED 2* is loud and violent, qualities that undermine its attempted good vibes. *RED 2* is a hyperactive slog through genre clichés that believes itself to be a relaxed and slyly self-reflexive romp, and this confusion makes for an exhausting and altogether depressing viewing experience. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Lorenzo di Bonaventura Mark Vahradian	presents a di Bonaventura Pictures production This film benefited from the French Tax Rebate for International Production	Jack Horton Steven Berkoff Cobb
Written by Jon Hoerber Erich Hoerber Based on characters created by Warren Ellis, Cully Hamner	Executive Producers Jake Myers David Ready	Tim Pigott-Smith Director Phillips Garrick Hagon Davis
Director of Photography Enrique Chediak	Cast Bruce Willis Frank Moses John Malkovich Marvin Boggs Mary-Louise Parker Sarah Ross Anthony Hopkins Bailey Helen Mirren Victoria Catherine Zeta-Jones Katja, 'Miranda Wood' Byung Hun Lee Han Cho Bai David Thewlis The Frog Brian Cox Ivan Neal McDonough	Dolby Digital/ Datasat In Colour Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1]
Editor Don Zimmerman		Distributor El Films
Production Designer Jim Clay		10,413 ft +0 frames
Music Composed and Conducted by Alan Silvestri		
Production Sound Mixer Chris Munro		
Costume Designer Beatrice Aruna Pasztor		
Stunt Co-ordinator Paul Jennings		
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Production Companies Summit Entertainment		

After attending the funeral of his former colleague Marvin Boggs, ex-CIA agent Frank Moses is taken into custody by government thugs and interrogated about a Cold War-era military initiative called Project Nightshade. He is rescued by Marvin, who had faked his death, and the pair go on the run with Frank's girlfriend Sarah in tow; they're pursued not only by Interpol but also MI6 assassin Victoria Winters and Korean contract killer Han. In London, the trio meet up with Frank's former flame Katja, who is investigating Nightshade on behalf of the Russian military. The group converge on incarcerated British scientist Edward Bailey, whom they break out of a maximum-security mental institution. He leads the group – including Victoria, who has joined the cause, and Han, who is still trying to kill Frank – to Nightshade, which is a massive chemical weapon stowed away in the walls of the Kremlin. Once the weapon has been recovered, Bailey kills Katja and reveals his plan: he intends to use the device to destroy Washington to avenge his late wife and son, who were apparently killed by the US government. He abducts Sarah and flees to a private jet, where Frank confronts him and trades Nightshade for the hostage; it turns out that the briefcase Frank has handed over is a dummy – Frank has put the real bomb elsewhere on the plane and wired it to explode. Han promises that he's going to kill Frank the next chance he gets.

Rock and Roll's Greatest Failure Otway the Movie

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Steve Barker
Certificate 12A 96m 3s



Top of the flops: John Otway

Reviewed by Sam Davies

Among the many strains of English eccentric, one has been slowly but undeniably dying from view over the past 20 or so years. The complete and utter no-hoper, the cheerfully quixotic loser, whether fictional (Frank Spencer in *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*) or real (Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, the ski-jumper from Stroud who competed, technically speaking, in the 1988 Winter Olympics), has become increasingly rare outside the early rounds of *The X Factor* or *Britain's Got Talent*. Musician John Otway is a classic of the type, though, and still going strong. Since his first hit in 1977, 'Really Free' (which reached number 27 in the UK singles charts), he has kept on keeping on, and with a certain counterintuitive marketing genius has turned his minimal sales figures into his USP.

A keynote for the film is struck with Otway's breakthrough performance on the BBC's *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1977, in which he bungles a leap from an amplifier stack and lands awkwardly on his testicles. At this point Otway had a real, if gawky, charisma, gambolling across

the stage with Byronic locks, loose white shirt and a capable guitarist, 'Wild' Willy Barrett, providing a foundation for his songs – which were a kind of artlessly surreal and lyrical cousin-by-marriage of punk. Despite his TV disaster, Polydor gave him a five-album deal worth £250,000. Otway promptly bought a Bentley he couldn't drive and recorded a follow-up single without his musical partner Barrett, ditching the electric guitar for an orchestral ballad so soporific, so middle-of-the-road, that his career crashed, apparently forever, into a ditch.

Otway, though, as this documentary argues quite persuasively, has if nothing else a remarkable ability to turn apparent failure into a viable career. Having decided that if he can't be the best pop star in the world he'll be the worst, he manages to fail his way on to local television, national television and the national press. With the concerted help of his fans, he lands in the top ten of a BBC poll of the greatest lyrics of all time, and eventually hits the charts again in 2002 with 'Bunsen Burner', a reworking of 'Disco Inferno'.

Director Steve Barker handles Otway's story skilfully enough in terms of its pacing and development. But his use of talking heads – collaborators, fans, celebrity supporters – is flawed. Many seem to be recounting their anecdotes or insights not spontaneously during interview but with the slightly lifeless air of the pre-scripted. At one point, a record producer's eyes can clearly be seen behind his sunglasses scanning his lines off camera. And while the film's micro-budget is probably an excuse, many of the graphics and animations are tacky enough to suggest that they might even be a kind of meta-joke – think Otway's rubbish? Look at these!

Otway's relentless enthusiasm and sheer fearlessness are clearly contagious and at times irresistible. But as *Otway the Movie* progresses, it becomes hard not to wonder whether his goofy positivity is entirely guileless; whether there is just a degree of performance that at times verges on the cynical. Did Otway truly believe his fans would happily cough up thousands to send him on an ill-advised 'world tour' by chartered jet, which they would not themselves get to see? The tour's failure, which costs Otway and investors heavily, is the only point in the film where the persona slips: "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to say, really," he comments, looking not just defeated, but – for once – unsure of how to spin gold from another failure. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

A Movie by Steve Barker David Painter Amy Otway Richard Holgarth	Post-production Sound Richard Holgarth	In Colour [1.85:1]
Cameras David Painter Steve Barker Amy Otway Editor Steve Barker	©Otway the Movie Ltd Production Company Richard Cotton and Karen Lawrence present	Distributor Otway the Movie Ltd
		8,719 ft +8 frames

A documentary charting the career of British singer-songwriter John Otway. Using a talk to sixth-formers at his old school in Aylesbury as a framing device, Otway recalls his big breaks (appearing on 'The Old Grey Whistle Test', winning a five-album recording contract), subsequent flops (every release after his debut) and eventual reinvention as a professional failure, mobilising a small group of loyal fans to engineer various coups. These include voting an Otway lyric into the top ten of a national BBC poll to decide the greatest lyric of all time and orchestrating a campaign to get an Otway single into the pop charts for his 50th birthday.

Otway's plan to persuade fans to invest enough money to send him on a world tour by chartered jet collapses but the story concludes on the red carpet of 'Otway the Movie', as the fan-funded film has its premiere in Leicester Square.

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Suspension of Disbelief

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Mike Figgis
Certificate 15 111m 31s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

In a recent essay for *The Observer*, Mike Figgis attacked the British film industry for being “scared shitless of all the changes in cinema” – a state of affairs apparently made plain by the failure of this latest directorial outing to source government funding or make it into publicly funded British film festivals. Few would claim that the current system is flawless, but the Figgis position loses solidity not just when he invokes John Boorman (80) and Nic Roeg (85) alongside himself (65) as the hungry talent currently being shut out by the fusty establishment, but when one lines *Suspension of Disbelief* up against recent titles by the likes of Clio Barnard, Carol Morley, Ben Wheatley, Sally El Hosaini and Paul Wright. Next to these funder- and festival-approved titles, it's Figgis's tepid noir that feels old school. Its plot – middle-aged writer is thrown into confusion by amoral young seductress and/or her dead twin! – is the stuff of the 90s erotic thriller, while its formal innovations consist of Godardian textual interruptions (phrases such as “TRUTH AND FICTION” and “CHARACTER IS PLOT” intermittently appear on screen) and minor chiselling at the fourth wall (the writer is writing the story we're watching as we go along, and teaching a screenwriting class on film plotting).

All this might just have been made to work if the characterisation had a bit of force but Figgis presents distinctly flimsy dramatis personae. Lead Sebastian Koch is required only to brood handsomely, and duly does so; the women around him, all either double-crossing bitches or weak flowers, are seen only in terms of their relationship to him. Deceased femme fatale Angelique (Lotte Verbeek) is introduced too briefly to claim our interest in her backstory; her sister Therese (also Verbeek) never seems to be feeling real emotions, the death of her twin leaving her apparently unscathed but for a need to get off with people her late sister knew.

Among many swipes at inferior filmmaking, Figgis includes a spoof on the use of gratuitous



Twin peaks: Lotte Verbeek, Sebastian Koch

lesbian activity to sex up a narrative – shortly before doing the very same himself. Here, as with some heavyhanded mockery of the inept updating of film-noir tropes, he seems to be missing the distinction between conscious irony and just contradicting yourself. There's nothing clever about doing something while saying, “Look at this clichéd thing I'm doing” – and it's downright hubristic, not to say risky, to do something while saying, “Look at me doing a clichéd thing that everyone else does badly.” (One of his targets would seem to be David Lynch yet Lynch is also shamelessly ripped off here, from highways that recede into darkness to shuffly jazz on the score to dream sequences featuring unforgettable drowned blondes positioned in front of curtains.)

Suspension of Disbelief isn't quite a turkey: it looks nice and if Verbeek is wooden in an impossible part, Koch and Rebecca Night, as his daughter Sarah, are watchable. But for Figgis to trumpet this as the unjustly overlooked harbinger of a creative revolution is a bit much. While he might have a point about a certain confusion in the current UK industry, he could also stand to acknowledge that people well acquainted with the existence and possibilities of digital filmmaking simply don't like this example of it. ☹

Upstream Color

Director: Shane Carruth
Certificate 12A 96m 7s

See Feature
on page 50

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A drifting ether of Sartrean *nausée* coming at us in the near-free-associative form of an anxious barbiturate swoon, Shane Carruth's

new film is not quite like any other – though whether that means to you that it represents a momentary audience-weirding aberration in cinema's 21st-century evolution or a sign of challenging things to come may depend on your own subcutaneous stores of cynicism and your sense of the medium requiring an overhaul. For daring to carve out its own territory on the frontier, and for insisting on the concreteness of its own symbological inventions, Carruth's may be the American arthouse film of the year – if in fact one could say with any certainty what it exactly is. Perhaps we could characterise it as experimental – not in the familiar sense of an avant-gardist work but literally an experiment seeking answers, exploring the possible future of narrative film. The prospect of such an elusive chimera appearing on screens in 2013 should be cause enough for joyful rioting.

Carruth's formal assault is all lacunal editing, intimate close-ups, suggestive dialectics; we see in gorgeous fragments, like an aggregate of incidents glimpsed while passing in and out of consciousness. The movie begins with plants, the discovery of nematodes in the soil, teens getting high, a mysterious man stalking strangers in public places. The sense of mystery is compelling, and familiar from Carruth's first film *Primer* (2004), a landmark head-scratch masterpiece that utilised the conundrums of time travel to twist our attention into knots. *Upstream* has no such convenient sci-fi crutch; its surface story, once you unravel it, is pure metaphor, bizarrely taken on face value and bottomlessly subtextual. The mysterious man (called ‘the Thief’ in the credits) uses the nematode as a brainwashing agent and soon enough Tasers a woman, Kris (Amy Seimetz) and forces the bug down her throat. She is thereafter hypnotised, selfless and receptive to controlling suggestion, leaving the Thief to hole her up in her apartment performing rote activities as he systematically strips her of money and assets. (The sexual uses she may be put to are left implied.) Eventually abandoned, she wakes in a wrecked flat to find worms under her skin, her internal organs scarred beyond repair and her material life stolen from her.

Then things get strange. Kris is saved from her infection via a blood transfusion from a piglet, managed by a sound recordist/pig farmer (‘the Sampler’), who has astral-projective powers (or is he a deity?) and whose farm, we eventually learn, is something like the nexus of the odd pharma-entomological dynamic we've tasted. This is in fact a cycle, both natural and toxic, in which the Sampler and the Thief are involved, though they never meet, and in which the Sampler's role seems at various times beneficent or creepily menacing. For reasons we can only creatively guess at, Thoreau's *Walden*, read and transcribed and memorised, is an integral factor in this organic scheme. Before all of that becomes apparent, however, Kris is pursued romantically by Jeff (Carruth), a rather shady man who seems

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Vito Di Rosa
Mike Figgis

Written by

Mike Figgis

Cinematography

Mike Figgis

Editing

Mike Figgis

Production Designer

Vito Di Rosa

Original Score

Mike Figgis

Sound Mixer

Pawel Wdowczak

Costume Design

Sandy Powell

Oliver Garcia

©Suspension Limited

Production

Companies

Content Media

Corporation in

association with

Red Mullet and

Sosho present a

Mike Figgis film

Executive Producers

Carola Ash
Nimmi Saraf

Cast

Sebastian Koch

Martin Ehrlichmann

Lotte Verbeek

Therese/Angelique

Prevert

Emilia Fox

Fiona Jones

Rebecca Night

Sarah Jones

Eoin Macken

Gregory O'Hanlon

Lachlan Nieboer

Dominic

Frances de la Tour

Nesta Rich-Harrick

Julian Sands

DCI Hackett

Kenneth Cranham

DCI Bullock

Melia Kreiling

Juliette Mekas

Russell Norman

Ross

Naoko Mori

WPC Floy

In Colour and

Black and White

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Swipe Films

10,036 ft +8 frames

England, the present. At the birthday party of his actress daughter Sarah, screenwriter and lecturer Martin flirts with a young woman, Angelique, who is subsequently found drowned. Angelique's twin sister Therese comes to claim the body and stays with Martin and Sarah. She tells Martin about a troubled childhood in which she and her sister were orphaned and separately adopted, only for her sister to accuse her adoptive father of sexual abuse. Stranded away from home after a car accident, Therese and Martin sleep together. In their absence, Sarah has sex with Greg, who is directing her in a sexually explicit film written by Martin. Martin learns from the twins' swimming teacher that they habitually pretended to be one another. An inquest finds that Angelique's death was accidental. Therese and Sarah go out drinking and then sleep together. At Angelique's funeral, Therese declares that she is leaving and asks Martin to take her to the airport. Aware that Martin has been researching her and Angelique, she tells him a different version of their childhood: they were both molested, impersonated one another to confuse all authority and possibly killed their adoptive father. Therese leaves. Martin discusses ambiguous endings with his screenwriting class. Greg's film premieres.

The Way Way Back

USA 2013

Directors: Nat Faxon, Jim Rash

Certificate 12A 103m 21s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The title refers to the back seat of the station wagon to which the overbearing Trent consigns his girlfriend's 14-year-old son Duncan, keeping the kid isolated and ostracised. That station wagon is a vintage Ford Country Squire with wood panelling and a green paint job, looking quite a bit like the Wagon Queen Family Truckster driven by the Griswolds in 1983's *National Lampoon's Vacation*. This suggests the double-meaning in the title: for *The Way Way Back* also frames itself as a self-conscious throwback to the one-crazy-summer comedies of the Reagan Years, to 1983, when the Water Wizz park, where much of the action takes place, first opened.

If you look at the film's poster, however, you will note another more relevant point of reference, for this is 'a new comedy from the studio that brought you *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Juno*'. *The Way Way Back* was co-written and co-directed by Nat Faxon and Jim Rash, both veteran scriptwriters and known quantities – they collaborated with Alexander Payne on the screenplay for 2011's *The Descendants* – and, of course, it premiered at Sundance, where it showed just the right amount of quirk to attract the eye of Fox Searchlight, which ponied up a staggering \$10 million. Which is to say that, yes, it's that sort of thing.

Of course this pedigree is no disqualification in and of itself – at the same Sundance you could've seen James Ponsoldt's *The Spectacular Now*, a non-derivative teen comedy with revelatory, unaffected performances by Miles Teller and Shailene Woodley, which proved that there's much young talent out there to be accessed by a sensitive director. *The Way Way Back*, however, rests on the stooped, turned-in shoulders of Liam James's Duncan, a clamped-up performance presented entirely in shades of dumb passivity.

James's part is not so much to do but to be done unto, acting as a sounding board for a platoon of indie stalwarts to bounce shtick off. Steve Carell plays the wicked would-be stepfather role, his one-note Trent an irredeemable petty sadist from the very first browbeating appearance. As contrasting father-substitute Owen, manager of the water park, Sam Rockwell lays on the hang-loose, doling out a steady prattle of 'bits' in which quantity is greatly



Guinea pigs: Shane Carruth, Amy Seimetz

to have been through something similar to Kris's traumatising ordeal and so may be responding to that same wound in her. Together they attempt to commit to a relationship of sorts, retaining a metaphysical bond with the pigs, while the predatory blue-secretional-nematode cycle seeks to restore itself through the water table...

That may not resemble the film you yourself see, of course. No film may be quite as contingent on cryptic intimation as Carruth's, and certainly no film since Eisenstein's *October* has relied so categorically on associative editing. You sense that a thoroughgoing metaphysics lies just behind the secretive passage of impressions – which is where, you equally sense, it should remain. Clearly, the film is intended as a tactile experience of poetic ideas, of modern disconnection and biophysical insecurity and existential doubt, and the clarity of these anxieties is bruising and stunning.

It doesn't hurt that the film is impeccably performed and shot, full of lyrical ellipses that dash Terrence Malick's vague flowers-in-the-sun aestheticism in a shot. If it had been a French novel published in 1961, its author would have been proclaimed a master of the modern age. As it is – and to perhaps cut the overhype – we should say that it's also a tiny, vaporous thing, a throb of feeling attached to sometimes ridiculous iconography, and the demands it puts on all but the most ambitious viewer may be overwhelming. Carruth is well aware; he not only crafted every aspect of *Upstream Color* himself, including the haunting ambient score, but he's also self-distributing it in the US – a task, given the film, that he'd probably planned on from the beginning. An ex-engineer and autodidact, he is dedicated to deep-dish philosophical and experiential ambiguity in a way that doesn't play, as Horatio Alger used to say, in Peoria, making him a unique figure in American film, its most sophisticated mad scientist.

For too many, *Upstream Color* will simply be that wispy, angsty, impenetrable film with the pigs and the blue flowers; but if you've done no more than feel the burn of the characters' injured quests for wholeness, you've been where Carruth meant to send you. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Shane Carruth
Casey Gooden
Ben LeClair
Written by
Shane Carruth
Director of Photography
Shane Carruth
Edited by
David Lowery
Shane Carruth
Production Designer
Thomas Walker
Original Score
Shane Carruth
Sound Designer
Johnny Marshall

Executive Producers
Scott Douglass
Brent Goodman

Cast

Amy Seimetz
Kris
Shane Carruth
Jeff
Andrew Sensenig
Sampler
Thiago Martins
thief
Kathy Carruth
orchid mother
Meredith Burke
orchid daughter

Andreon Watson
Peter
Ashton Miramontes
Lucas
Mysles McGee
Monty

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Metrodome
Distribution Ltd

8,650 ft +8 frames

UK publicity title
Upstream Colour

A man handling plants finds grubs in the soil; he cultivates them to use as a brainwashing narcotic on a stranger. He drugs a young woman, Kris, and as she performs meaningless activities in her apartment (including transcribing 'Walden'), he cleans out her bank account. When she wakes, she finds herself destitute and infected – a situation remedied by the Sampler, a semi-spiritual man who records natural noises and runs a pig farm, and who transfers her parasite to a pig. Thereafter, Kris is cosmically attuned to the pig. As she tries to return to normal life, she is pursued by Jeff, a young man who seems traumatised like her. They struggle to become close. The Sampler dumps the bodies of the infected pigs in a local river, thereby reintroducing the grub into the water supply. Eventually, Kris and Jeff 'kill' the Sampler in a kind of dream state. They find his abandoned residence, where the remaining pigs thrive and where files detail all the infected victims. Contacted via a mailed copy of 'Walden', the victims congregate at the farm and make it their own.



Teenage kicks: Liam James

valued over quality. Rounding out the cast are Allison Janney as the perpetually squiffed divorcee neighbour and AnnaSophia Robb as her daughter, having the unenviable task of acting as though she's beguiled and charmed by James while he projects all the presence of a pile of damp cardboard.

There's precious little space for the performers to create any sense of an independent life for these characters outside their relationship with the misunderstood, dour Duncan, as wronged by the adult world as poor Benjamin Braddock in *The Graduate* (1967), the template for all coming-of-age films using blinkered, self-pitying first-person perspective and sappy pop cues. (Not wanting to miss a reference, the poster puts Duncan at the bottom of a swimming pool, à la Braddock in his scuba gear.) Central to the film's premise is that Duncan, unbeknown to his self-involved guardians, who see only the brooding facade they're in fact responsible for, is possessed of a radiant secret charm. It is a very well-kept secret. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Kevin J. Walsh
Tom Rice

Written by

Nat Faxon
Jim Rash

Director of

Photography

John Bailey

Editor

Tatiana S. Riegel

Production

Designer

Mark Ricker

Music

Rob Simonsen

Sound Mixer

Kevin Parker

Costume Designers

Ann Roth

Michelle Matland

Pictures, Walsh

Company, OddLot

Entertainment

production in

association with

What Just Happened

Productions

A film by Nat Faxon

& Jim Rash

With the

participation of

The Massachusetts

Film Office

Executive

Producers

Nat Faxon

Jim Rash

Ben Nearn

Gigi Pritzker

George Parra

Owen

Maya Rudolph

Caitlin

Rob Corddry

Kip

Amanda Peet

Joan

Liam James

Duncan

River Alexander

Peter

Zoe Levin

Steph

Nat Faxon

Roddy

Jim Rash

Lewis

Cast

Steve Carell

Trent

Toni Collette

Pam

Allison Janney

Betty

AnnaSophia Robb

Susanna

Sam Rockwell

When the Dragon Swallowed the Sun

USA 2011

Director: Dirk Simon

Certificate 15 113m 47s

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Like the majority of documentaries about Tibet, Dirk Simon's *When the Dragon Swallowed the Sun* is unashamedly opposed to Chinese occupation of the country. What's unique is its depiction of the Tibetans as a heterogeneous group whose attitudes to their current situation and future are divided and at times divisive.

The film gives a brief history of Tibet but its primary focus is on the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the world's attention was turned towards China and the country's reputation was arguably at its most vulnerable. For the Tibetans, this was a time to mobilise. But for what? While the Dalai Lama defends his call for Tibetan autonomy within the People's Republic – his 'Middle Way' – others, including Students for a Free Tibet representative Lhasang Tsering, won't accept anything less than full independence. Even shared goals don't mean consensus on how best to achieve them. A former president of the Tibetan Youth Congress sagely points out that the number of Chinese soldiers is greater than the entire Tibetan population, but for some it is still better to die for freedom than to live under communism. Lhakpu Kyizom, of Tibet's Active Nonviolence Education Centre (and one of very few women interviewed), calls for understanding, arguing that it is only by meeting with Chinese scholars and students that progress can be made. Others demand guerrilla action such as electricity blackouts and industrial attacks, the strategic strengths of which are underlined by a montage of Beijing's buzzing, blinking business districts and stroboscopic shopping malls.

While the pluralist approach is admirable, it's just possible that Simon tries to do a little too much here. To the mix of talking heads, archive footage, historical re-enactment and original material set in present-day Lhasa, Beijing, San Francisco and Dharamshala (where the Central Tibetan Administration is based), he adds animation, dance sequences and a bewildering amount of time-lapse photography, all set to a constant soundtrack of whimsical world music from Philip Glass, Thom Yorke and Damien Rice. The average shot length is around four seconds – only marginally longer than that of a Michael Bay film – and as editor



When the Dragon Swallowed the Sun

Dave Krahling cuts, cuts and cuts again, there's simply too little time to take anything in. A shutter-fast montage of the Tibetan Games, for example, an event set up as a kind of alternative Olympics, dangles the potential of real human warmth before us, as do the interludes focusing on Lhagyari Trichen Namgyal Wangchuk, heir to the Tibetan throne. It's a shame, then, that such moments are quickly snatched away.

There's no time to linger as Simon strives to force his point home to the western audiences at whom the film is so clearly aimed (the Tibetan participants, with few exceptions, speak English during their interviews). And one has to hand it to him, he works the first-world-guilt tactics with aplomb – we are informed that the US indulged China's aggressive imperialism for fear of driving the country into the arms of the communist Soviet Union. The figure of six million (the estimated number of Tibetans alive today) is repeated over and over in connection with the word genocide, footage of the Beijing Olympics is edited to draw parallels with Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, and the comparison with Berlin 1936 is made explicit by Tenzin Dorjee of Students for a Free Tibet, who adds that the "world must beware: another holocaust is coming". As ceremony and film close out with a barrage of fireworks set to an apocalyptic score, one can only wonder where the line between polemic and propaganda is drawn. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Dirk Simon

Vanessa Phillips

Written by

Dirk Simon

Cinematography

Robert Muratore

Jeff Pointer

Editor

Dave Krahling

Set Design

Sidharth Mathawan

Meghna Singh

Original Theme

Music

Philip Glass

Original Music

Damien Rice

Thom Yorke

Supervising

Sound Editor/

Re-recording Mixer

Phillip Lloyd Hegel

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Films, LLC

Production

Company

Free Motion Films

A Dirk Simon film

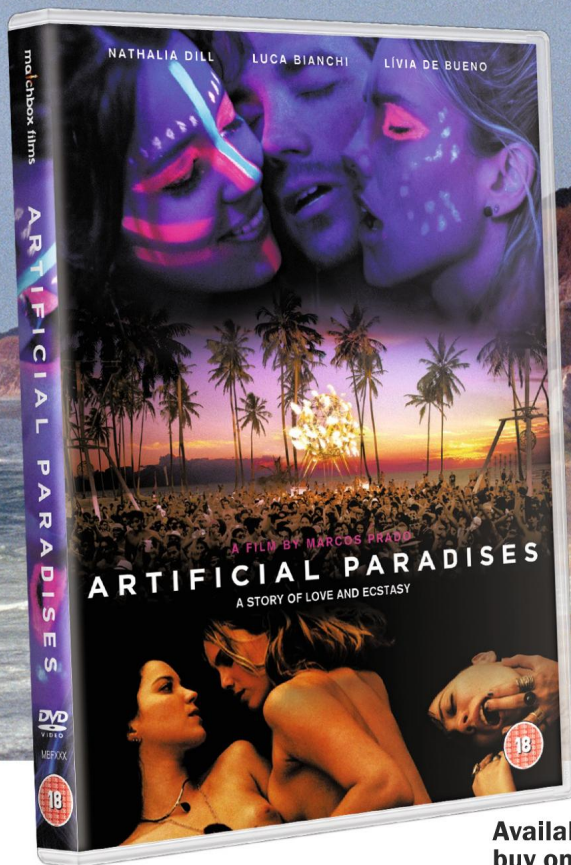
Executive Producers

Dennis Riordan

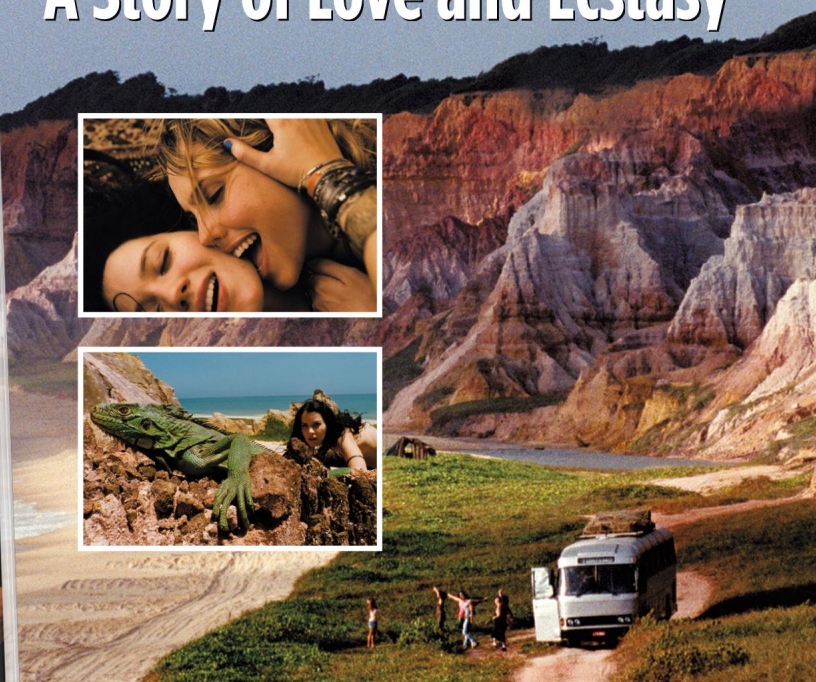
Cle Riordan

Distributor

Arrow Films



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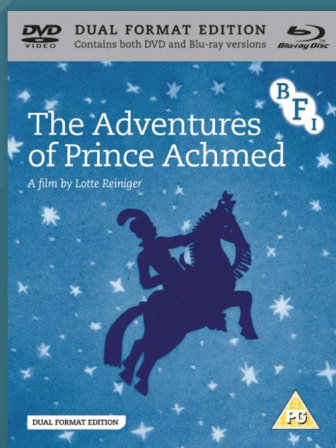
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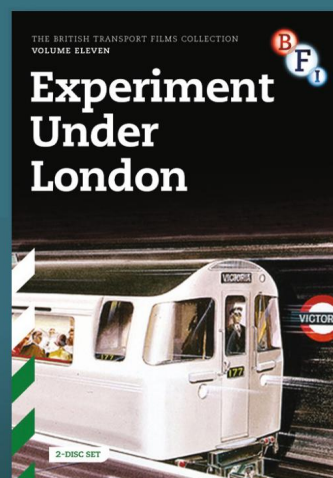


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White House Down

USA 2013
Director: Roland Emmerich
Certificate 12A 131m 29s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

When Roland Emmerich's *White House Down* was released in the US earlier this year, a small cabal of critics saw its almost encyclopaedic collection of clichés as a hysterical action-movie parody, regardless of what the actual intentions of its creators may have been. This is a little deep into Death of the Author territory for me – although one could be forgiven for thinking that Emmerich and screenwriter James Vanderbilt deserve at least a dead leg for what they've done here.

In what is now the second White House-under-siege film of the year, after *Olympus Has Fallen*, Jamie Foxx plays the US president, Channing Tatum the US Capitol police officer charged with squiring the president through the terrorist-compromised executive home – though Cale must also worry about his 12-year-old daughter, played by Joey King. King spends a good bit of her screen time with a firearm levelled at her head, which gives you a good idea of Emmerich's sense of taste and decency. Thinking, "Oh, look, Michael Murphy" (in a small role as vice-president) is about as much pleasure as there is to take in the performances.

The film is something like Aldrich's *Twilight's Last Gleaming* as made by people without a single iota of respect for their audience or any principle – patriotic kitsch that makes one long for the classical storytelling and humanism of, say, Peter Berg's *Battleship*. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Bradley J. Fischer Harald Kloser James Vanderbilt Larry Franco Laeta Kalogridis Written by James Vanderbilt Director of Photography Anna J. Foerster Editor Adam Wolfe Production Designer Kirk M. Petrucci Music Thomas Wander Harald Kloser Sound Design Paul N.J. Ottosson Costume Designer Lisy Christl	Entertainment production Executive Producers Ute Emmerich Channing Tatum Reid Carolin Film Extracts <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> (1968)	Vice President Alvin Hammond Rachelle Lefevre Melanie Lance Reddick General Caulfield Matt Craven Agent Kellerman Jake Weber Agent Hope Peter Jacobson Wallace Barbara Williams Muriel Walker Kevin Rankin Killick Garcelle Beauvais Alison Sawyer Falk Hentschel Motts
Cast Channing Tatum John Cale Jamie Foxx President James Sawyer Maggie Gyllenhaal Carol Finnerty Jason Clarke Emil Stenz Richard Jenkins Eli Raphaelson Joey King Emily Cale James Woods Martin Walker Nicolas Wright Donnie the guide Jimmi Simpson Tyler Michael Murphy	Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]	Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing 11,833ft + 8 frames

Washington, DC, present day. US Capitol police officer John Cale brings his 12-year-old daughter Emily on a White House tour on the same day that he's interviewing for a job with the secret service. Meanwhile, President James Sawyer's controversial Middle East peace treaty is the subject of much debate. John doesn't get the job but when domestic terrorists seize the White House, he protects the president. The terrorists identify John's daughter and hold her hostage, very nearly managing to launch a nuclear strike against the Middle East. In the nick of time, the terrorists are foiled and killed, allowing the peace treaty to go ahead.

The Wolverine

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: James Mangold
Certificate 12A 125m 58s



Claws and effect: Hugh Jackman

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Thanks to a complex set of assigned rights, the Marvel Comics Universe is subdivided among the major studios: Disney and Marvel continue the interlinked series of films associated with the Avengers, Columbia has rebooted Spider-Man to keep Peter Parker stuck in its web, and 20th Century Fox retains the sub-universe of the X-Men titles. Based on a group of heroes rather than an individual, the series that began with Bryan Singer's *X-Men* (2000) and last manifested in Matthew Vaughn's *X-Men: First Class* (2011) set the pattern that Marvel has itself followed in its wholly owned movies: multi-film arcs, teasers embedded in the end credits featuring star cameos and hints of what's to come (*The Wolverine* sets up Singer's forthcoming *X-Men: Days of Future Past*),

guest spots for characters left over from other movies, and an intricate, interlocking continuity that ties itself in hard-to-untangle knots (there are seemingly two irreconcilable Emma Frosts in the series) even as it suggests a larger universe.

Readers of the comics have long been used to the coexistence of varying takes on the same characters in different titles – so that Wolverine can be a berserker killing-machine and a kindly uncle the same month, depending on who's writing or drawing him or the age the comic is aimed at – but that's a tougher pill for cinema audiences to swallow. Imagine if Sean Connery, Roger Moore and Daniel Craig alternated the role of James Bond rather than occupying it for a spell and moving on. Hugh Jackman's Wolverine was the breakout star of the initial

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Lauren Shuler Donner Hutch Parker Screenplay Mark Bomback Scott Frank Director of Photography Ross Emery Film Editor Michael McCusker Production Designer Francois Audouy Music Marco Beltrami Production Sound Recordist Guntis Sics Costume Designer	Isis Mussenden Visual Effects & Animation Weta Digital Ltd Visual Effects Rising Sun Pictures Iloura Method Studios Shade Stunt Co-ordinator Allan Poppleton Fight Co-ordinator Jonathan Eusebio ©Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in all	territories except Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain) ©TCF Hungry Film Rights Exploitation Limited Liability Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain) Production Companies A Twentieth Century Fox presentation in association with Marvel Entertainment	A Donners' Company production A film by James Mangold Made in association with TSG Entertainment and Ingenious Media Produced in association with Big Screen Productions Executive Producers Stan Lee Joe Caracciolo Jr Cast Hugh Jackman Logan, 'Wolverine'	Hiroyuki Sanada Shingen Yashida Tao Okamoto Mariko Rila Fukushima Yukio Famke Janssen Jean Grey Will Yun Lee Kenuichio Harada, 'Silver Samurai' Svetlana Khodchenkova Viper Haruhiko Yamanouchi Lord Yashida Brian Tee Noburo	Dolby Atmos/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1] Part-subtitled Some screenings presented in 3D Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK) 11,337 ft +0 frames
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Nagasaki, Japan, 1945. Prisoner of war Logan – aka the Wolverine, a clawed, nearly invulnerable, ageless Canadian mutant – saves the life of Yashida, a young officer, when an atomic bomb is dropped on the city.

In the near future, Logan – grieving over Jean Grey, the mutant he loved but had to kill – lives wild in the Canadian woods. Yukio, an agent of the Clan Yashida, tracks him down and asks him to attend Yashida's deathbed in Tokyo. At the funeral, yakuza members try to abduct Mariko, Yashida's granddaughter and heir. Logan intervenes to protect the girl. Viper, a mutant doctor,

leeches Logan's healing ability, leaving him vulnerable to injury. Logan spirits Mariko away and they become lovers, but she is kidnapped by the clan. Logan cuts the power-inhibiting device out of his heart and, at full strength, traces Mariko to a Yashida castle. Yukio fights with the skin-shedding Viper and Logan battles Silver Samurai, a giant cyborg which turns out to be Yashida, hoping to steal Logan's life essence and become immortal. Logan defeats his enemies but leaves Mariko to run the clan.

Two years later, Logan is approached by an old enemy and an old friend and warned of a coming crisis...

The World's End

USA/United Kingdom/Japan 2013

Director: Edgar Wright

Certificate 15 108m 52s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Even more than its predecessors, *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007), also co-written by director Edgar Wright and star Simon Pegg, *The World's End* buries a generational ennui beneath its layers of pop-cultural references. In the first scene, an unseen Gary (Pegg) describes in gratingly matey voiceover his last day of school, 22 June 1990, when he and his friends went on an underage 12-pub crawl, seen in a home-movie montage, before announcing, to what we finally realise is an AA meeting or similar, that nothing has been as good since. Primal Scream's 'Loaded' then plays ironically over the credits sequence, which shows Gary's old gang going about their joyless business 20-odd years later. Gary is an unequivocally sad case but his four friends, now estranged, are not happy either.

The World's End itself is the pub they never reached in 1990; despite hinted-at past transgressions, Gary manages to cajole the group into reuniting in Newton Haven, a satellite town near High Wycombe, to try again. All the Wright-Pegg films, and the sitcom *Spaced* before them, are concerned with late-onset adulthood and lament the cropped horizons that contemporary Britain seems to offer young men (none of the films, including this one, has much space for women). In *Shaun*, Pegg played a twentysomething slacker who was forced to shape up (to keep his girlfriend), and in *Hot Fuzz* an overzealous cop who was made to slow down (because he lost his fiancée); this time, pushing 40 in duster and DMs, snorting cocaine at the motorway services, he has gone far beyond the bounds of mere slackerdom, while Nick Frost, a man-child in both of the earlier movies, plays overworked corporate lawyer Andy (who has lost his wife), once Gary's best friend and now the most reluctant of the group to accept his invitation.

The first half of *The World's End*, shot and edited with Wright's usual verve, telling some of its story through a soundtrack of early 1990s

hits ('Old Red Eyes Is Back'), is both well-observed comedy and auto-critique of the comedic habit. Gary is a relentless banterer and while his friends warm to the idea of spending an evening together, it becomes clear that, despite having brought them there, he is barely interested in them if they aren't laughing at his jokes. The crunch comes when too-mild-mannered car salesman Peter (Eddie Marsan) recognises – but is not recognised by – a school bully, and begins to open up about the damage the bully did, only for Gary to interrupt with a round of shots. Outraged by his insensitivity, Andy decides to abandon the crawl and tells Gary to "join society"; Gary, for his part, tells the group that they envy his freedom, ironically and characteristically quoting the Soup Dragons' 'I'm Free'.

It is at this point that Gary discovers that the townspeople have been replaced by blue-blooded robot-alien, and the film abruptly changes genre. *Shaun* brought Romero's zombies to North London; *Hot Fuzz* applied the Bruckheimer aesthetic to the West Country; *The World's End* returns the alien-invasion cycle to the Home Counties. If *Shaun* equated zombification with the real-life challenges Pegg's character had to confront or accommodate himself to, here the aliens avowedly represent conformity. It is explained more than once that the aliens have replaced the humans with replicants whose task is to prepare the rest of the world for a 'merger' with other life forms. While this obviously chimes with the injunction to "join society", the allegory gets lost amid complex sci-fi rule-making – some replicants age, some don't, etc – and endless fight and chase scenes.

It is not, after all, a good allegory: writing off everyone who conforms as literally empty-headed is adolescent, and its introduction almost scuppers an otherwise sensitive film. The aliens' plan is finally treated as a joke, when the voice of Bill Nighy, putting the aliens'

X-Men films, just as the character had been in Chris Claremont and John Byrne's run at the comic in the 70s and 80s, and has already had one spinoff vehicle in Gavin Hood's indifferently received *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009). There was a general feeling that this didn't do the character justice, so *The Wolverine* breaks with it, only to yoke itself to Brett Ratner's even-less-liked *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006). Whereas the earlier Wolverine film was a fill-in-the-gaps prequel, which took Jackman out of the X-Men but forced him to jostle with other characters who could conceivably sustain their own films (Taylor Kitsch's Gambit, Ryan Reynolds's Deadpool), this cuts him loose from any team. Famke Janssen shows up in dreams as the ghost of Jean Grey, the reason Wolverine is living off the grid at the outset, but otherwise we're taken to a new country – Japan – and dealing with a less flamboyant set of characters. For the most part, overlooking Svetlana Khodchenkova's Mystique-lite snakeskinned femme fatale in skin-tight green, James Mangold's film gets away from the superhero genre as Wolverine is involved with yakuza, ninja and samurai business... only to get into a Tony Stark-style tussle with a villain in giant robot armour at the climax.

The plot and feel are mostly drawn from the 1982 *Wolverine* miniseries written by Claremont and drawn by Frank Miller, which redefined the character (again) as a harder-edged (or at least sharper-clawed) creation for the 80s. Here, Mangold stages a couple of excellent, Bondian battles – including an outstanding fight on top of the Japanese bullet train whizzing through a built-up area rife with low bridges and sharp turns – and tries to ground the hero by taking away his fast-healing abilities for the bulk of the film (this has been the premise of a recent Wolverine run, 'Killable'), but somehow the results are only fitfully more engaging than *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

It may be that the character is really too cool for school and works best when he has something petty to gripe about – the friction he has with do-gooder mutants in the *X-Men* films, expressed in what was perhaps Jackman's best moment in the role, his two-word cameo in *X-Men: First Class* – rather than spending time maudering on about the loneliness of immortality and the way his girlfriends tend to get disembowelled. One of the worst aspects of Marvel's heroes – which has infected DC's stable too – is this tendency to self-pity, and especially to use (and slaughter) strong female characters solely to give the he-men something to feel bad about. Few Marvel heroines are as passive and forgettable as Mariko – whom Wolverine married in the comics, before she was inevitably gutted – and it seems bizarre that Logan is so instantly smitten with her here, while ignoring Rila Fukushima's spiky, interesting, mutant-powered Yukio.

Jackman's Wolverine is stripped (often literally) of his superhero suit and gets a less caricature look, but doesn't seem more animalistic or honourable here than in the other movies. Claremont and Miller gave Logan an arc, a descent into feral madness mitigated by his increasing Zen calm, which ought to be the spine of this film but is somehow absent. ☹



Last orders: Martin Freeman, Paddy Considine, Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Eddie Marsan

case, tries to win over Gary and Andy but gives up when they quote the opening sample from 'Loaded' at him. Minutes earlier, the two have confessed their disappointment to each other: neither feels that they have lived up to their 'potential', but there isn't time or sufficient ruthlessness in the film to ask what realistically might have been. The conflict in their relationship, and the sadness, are pushed to one side to get a laugh. In a sense, then, Gary wins – although in the final minutes it is revealed that his victory has entailed the actual end of the world. But was any of the alien stuff necessary? **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nira Park
Tim Bevan
Eric Fellner
Written by
Simon Pegg
Edgar Wright
Director of Photography
Bill Pope
Editor
Paul Machliss
Production Designer
Marcus Rowland
Music
Steven Price
Supervising Sound Editor/
Sound Designer
Julian Slater
Costume Designer
Guy Speranza
Visual Effects
Double Negative
Supervising Stunt Co-ordinator
Brad Allan

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Production Companies
Universal Pictures
presents in association with
Relativity Media

a Working Title production in association with Big Talk Pictures Presented in association with Dentsu Inc./Fuji Television Network, Inc.
Executive Producers
James Biddle
Edgar Wright
Simon Pegg
Nick Frost
Liza Chasin
Film Extracts
The Wild Angels (1966)

Cast
Simon Pegg
Gary King
Nick Frost
Andrew Knightley
Paddy Considine
Steven Prince
Martin Freeman
Oliver Chamberlain
Eddie Marsan
Peter Page
Rosamund Pike
Sam Chamberlain
Pierce Brosnan
Guy Shepherd

David Bradley
Basil
Darren Boyd
Shane Hawkins
Michael Smiley
Reverend Green
Nicholas Burns
collaborator
Mark Heap
publican 7
Steve Oram
motorcycle policeman
Reece Shearsmith
collaborator
Bill Nighy
The Network

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

9,798 ft +0 frames

England, the present. Gary, an alcoholic and recovering drug addict, recounts the greatest night of his life, 22 June 1990, to his support group, and determines to re-enact it, this time finishing the 12-pub crawl that he and his then teenage friends had to abandon. Andy, Oliver, Steven and Peter are all now gainfully employed and in relationships. Not having seen Gary in ten or more years, they return with him to their hometown of Newton Haven, Buckinghamshire, only reluctantly.

Early in the evening they encounter Oliver's sister Sam, with whom Gary had sex during the famous night 20 years before; he propositions her again and is rebuffed. Soon afterwards, the teetotal Andy decides to abandon the crawl, and tells Gary to grow up. Gary discovers that the townspeople have been replaced by blue-blooded robots, and the gang decide to continue the crawl in order not to draw attention to themselves.

After a series of scrapes, during which some of the gang are captured by the robots, Gary and Andy arrive at the twelfth pub, The World's End, where they argue about what went wrong in their friendship. They are interrupted by a disembodied alien voice, which explains that the humans have been replaced by replicants whose purpose is to spread a message of intergalactic conformity. Gary's response convinces the alien that mankind is not worth winning over.

In an epilogue, Andy, in the ruins of London, explains to a group of children that the withdrawal of alien support from Earth led to apocalypse.

You're Next

USA/United Kingdom 2013

Director: Adam Wingard

Certificate 18 94m 36s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"It should be interesting," says Crispian Davison (A.J. Bowen) to his younger Australian girlfriend Erin (Sharni Vinson), about the first gathering in years of the entire Davison clan. "You'll see."

Sure enough, tensions abound as underachieving academic Crispian and the other three adult Davison siblings – nettlesome Drake (Joe Swanberg), 'princess' Aimee (Amy Seimetz) and black sheep Felix (Nicholas Tucci) – converge with their respective partners for the 35th wedding anniversary of their recently retired father Paul (Rob Moran) and ailing mother Aubrey (Barbara Crampton) in an old woodland mansion which, like the family it now accommodates, lets its cracks show. So the stage seems set for a finely observed social comedy of dysfunctional manners – except that a rather different genre has been suggested by the prologue, in which the senior Davisons' new neighbours are slaughtered post-coitally by intruders who daub "You're next" on the walls in the couple's blood.

Soon family and friends find themselves at odds not just with each other but with three masked assailants who are, for reasons as yet unknown, intent on murdering them with crossbow, machete and axe – though no one reckons on the fact that Erin, a stranger in this all-American family, was raised in a survivalist compound and is not merely going to watch quietly from the sidelines. Amid all the domestic squabbling and bloody butchery, comedy and horror will come crashing together, as director Adam Wingard and writer Simon Barrett set about cruelly dissecting the generational decline of the haute bourgeoisie. Even the title *You're Next*, which at first sounds so blandly generic, turns out to allude obliquely to the issues of succession and inheritance that haunt the Davisons' dwindling dynasty and motor the film's home-invasion/slasher plot.

With its feckless post-teen characters and its cast of mumblecore luminaries and Fantastic Fest folk, *You're Next* aligns itself with the indie



Axe nicely: Sharni Vinson

horror movement-of-the-moment known loosely as 'mumblecore' – think the Duplass brothers' *Baghead* (2008), Wingard's own *A Horrible Way to Die* (2010), Joe Swanberg's *Silver Bullets* (2011), Katie Aselton's *Black Rock* (2012) and the films of Ti West (who cameos here as Aimee's documentary-directing boyfriend Tariq). Yet while Wingard's latest has the broadest mainstream appeal of all these titles, its focus on class is unusual in contemporary American genre cinema. For here there is a dynamic contrast not only between self-reliant, affluent parents and their work-shy, parasitic children, but also between Paul, who has made his fortune marketing at the top end of the military-industrial complex, and the three mercenary grunts from its bottom who are trying to kill him. Meanwhile outsider Erin has been working her way through college as resourcefully as she will slice through aggressors.

So even if *You're Next* combines the eerie home invasions of *The Strangers* (2008) with the destructive family dysfunction, animal masks, axes through doors and even musical cues from *The Shining* (1980), it offers its own hilarious, high-body-count take on the uneasy downward flow of American capital. You'll see. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Keith Calder
Jessica Wu
Simon Barrett
Kim Sherman
Written by
Simon Barrett
Director of Photography
Andrew Droz Palermo
Edited by
Adam Wingard
Production Designer
Thomas S. Hammock
Music
Jasper Justice Lee
Kyle McKinnon
Mads Heldtberg
Adam Wingard
Production Sound Mixer
Jesse 'C Nug' Brown
Costume Designer
Emma Potter

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Production Companies
A Lionsgate and
Snoot Films

presentation in association with HanWay Films

Cast
Sharni Vinson
Erin
Nicholas Tucci
Felix Davison
Wendy Glenn
Zee
AJ Bowen
Crispian Davison
Joe Swanberg
Drake Davison
Amy Seimetz
Aimee Davison
Ti West
Tariq
Rob Moran
Paul Davison
Barbara Crampton
Aubrey Davison
L.C. Holt
lamb mask
Simon Barrett
tiger mask
Lane Hughes
fox mask

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Icon Film
Distribution/
Lionsgate UK

8,514 ft +0 frames

A student and her older professor are murdered in their woodland love nest by strangers who leave the message "You're next" written in blood.

Entering their retirement mansion next door, Paul and Aubrey Davison hear footsteps upstairs, but are distracted by the arrival of their four adult children (Crispian, Drake, Felix, Aimee) and their respective partners (Erin, Kelly, Zee, Tariq) for a rare family get-together. During dinner, arrows fired from outside kill Tariq and injure Drake. As she sprints out of the front door to get help, Aimee's throat is cut on a wire trap. The traumatised Aubrey is hacked to death in her upstairs bedroom by a hidden killer who uses her blood to write "You're next". Fleeing next door, Kelly is killed by another masked figure. Crispian goes to seek help, while Erin batters a masked intruder to death. After Paul is murdered upstairs, it emerges that Felix (with Zee) has hired three killers to expedite access to his inheritance. Reluctantly, Felix himself stabs Drake. Erin finds Paul's body and, realising what is happening, outwits and kills the other two mercenaries, then dispatches Felix and Zee in a vicious kitchen fight. When Crispian returns, inadvertently revealing that he is in on Felix's plot, Erin kills him too. A policeman arrives and is about to arrest the bloodsoaked Erin when he accidentally walks into an axe trap that she had set earlier.

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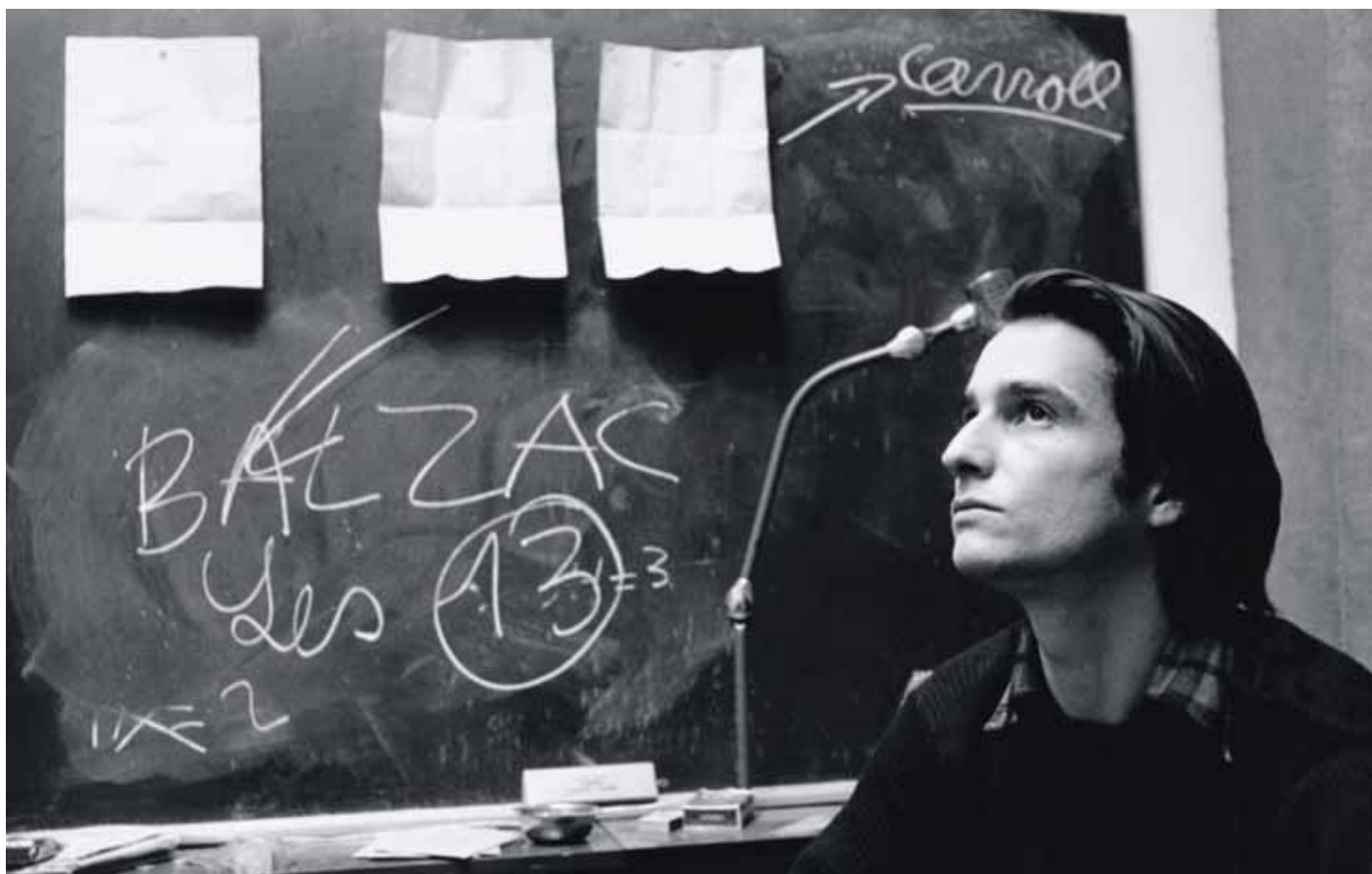
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Home cinema



On the margins: Jean-Pierre Léaud in Jacques Rivette's *Out 1*

THE MYSTERIOUS CITY

Explorations of a dream Paris, these Jacques Rivette films spin a peculiar cinematic magic from everyday urban reality

FILMS BY JACQUES RIVETTE

OUT 1

France 1970; Arte Edition/Absolut Medien/Region 2 DVD; 745 minutes; Aspect Ratio 3:4; Features: 253-minute version 'Out 1 Spectre'; booklet (in German), subtitles in English (main film only) and German; Jacques Rivette interviews, documentary by Wilfried Reichart, 'The Mysteries of Paris'

LE PONT DU NORD

France 1981; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; 129 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: 56-page booklet, optional English subtitles

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

Jacques Rivette's 12-hour-plus *Out 1* languished for years as one of European cinema's great unseen films, although it has gradually emerged into the daylight over the past decade or so – with this welcome DVD box-set representing something of a holy grail for Rivette admirers. *Out 1* is perhaps the director's ultimate fiction – in the sense of an attempt to create something

that is larger and stranger than everyday reality, yet made out of the very stuff of the quotidian.

That has been a key ploy of Rivette's from the very start; his first feature, *Paris nous appartient* (1961), spun a tantalisingly complex narrative – or rather, the smoke-and-mirrors effect of such a narrative – out of the mundane scenery of late-50s Parisian attics, theatres, bedrooms and rehearsal spaces. The peculiar magic of films such as *Paris nous appartient*, *Céline and Julie Go Boating*, *Le Pont du Nord* and *Out 1* is to evoke the mysterious, sinister underside of the known urban landscape while really showing little but the familiar city, in its rawest, unadorned form.

Out 1 – originally made as an eight-part TV serial but never screened as such – is Rivette's most elaborate attempt to spin the richest possible fiction out of the plainest ingredients. His basic material: Paris in 1970, and an artistic and cultural subculture in the doldrums two years after the anti-climax of 1968. Here's the plot, or rather, some elements of plot (everyone chooses their own dominant pattern when watching *Out 1*): two theatre groups, led respectively by Lili (Michèle Moretti) and the charismatic Thomas (Michel Lonsdale), attempt to rehearse experimental productions of Aeschylus, vaguely

in the mode of Peter Brook (with whom Lonsdale had worked); an enthused young loner named Colin (Jean-Pierre Léaud) comes into possession of an enigmatic text, spiked with allusions to Balzac and Lewis Carroll, which puts him on the trail of a supposed conspiracy, 'the Thirteen'.

Also tangling with this cabal, though by a more indirect route, is another solitary dreamer, a thief and con artist named Frédérique (Juliet Berto), who may be cooking up the whole story in her mind, alone in her *chambre de bonne* overlooking the city. All roads seem to lead to L'Angle du Hasard (Chance Corner), a head shop cum militant hangout run by bohemian bourgeoisie Pauline, aka Emilie (Bulle Ogier). Also involved are Eric Rohmer (a juicy cameo as a bemused Balzac specialist); a group of unflappable Establishment figures (played by actors including Françoise Fabian and *Cahiers du cinéma* founding father Jacques Doniol-Valcroze); Bernadette Lafont as a blocked novelist whose character suddenly takes a baleful, Lynchian turn in the final chapter; and an eerie beachside house with a locked room that possibly contains the Thirteen's absentee member Igor – or possibly nothing at all.

Out 1 (sometimes known by the subtitle 'Noli Me Tangere', for reasons explained by Rivette

in the bonus interviews, although the words don't appear in the credits) is a mesmerising narrative, yet at moments barely watchable. The film bears many traces of its place and period, but the hardest to handle today is the extensive amount of theatre rehearsal, now smacking of post-hippie 'happening' (or worse, workshop towards happening) of the most unpalatable kind. It's sometimes hard for Rivette viewers to take his characteristic plays-within-films as seriously as he does, but these sessions are particularly gruelling.

What's ironic is that the rehearsals themselves, arduous workings towards productions that can never finally happen, are offset – and upstaged – by dramatic episodes that display the magic of cinema as an art of the spontaneous. The drama of *Out 1* was entirely improvised by the cast, after they and Rivette had devised the characters and the narrative broad strokes. Especially in the Léaud and Berto strands (both play childlike 'orphan' figures trying for a foothold in the adult world), there's a powerful sense of pure play, of something conjured up, in the instant, out of nothing. In Wilfried Reichart's accompanying documentary, one glimpse of how things came together is provided by an anecdote told by Doniol-Valcroze: shooting a dialogue with Françoise Fabian, involving some letters belonging to his character Etienne, he suddenly came up with the idea that the letters had been stolen. As a result, Rivette and co had to devise a scene – shot that same day but placed several hours earlier in the film – in which Frédérique steals the letters, thereby sparking an entire plot strand.

The film was called *Out 1* because it was about marginal characters, and because there could easily have been a sequel called *Out 2*. At work here is the ideal of the ever-expanding narrative that can never be contained or exhausted (one imagines a sort of boho post-surrealist *EastEnders*), but in fact the closing episodes tellingly show the narrative drive to proliferation winding down into episodes of despair and madness, and into increasing fragmentation. The underlying model for such narrative expansion is of course Balzac's vast series 'The Human Comedy' – to which Rivette admits coming late, long after completing the film (Rohmer was in fact the true Balzacian). But there are other parallels: the serials of Eugène Sue in literature (*The Mysteries of Paris*) and Louis Feuillade in silent cinema ("Strange," muses Frédérique, turning to camera, "it's like being in a cloak-and-dagger story"), Julio Cortázar's similarly fragmented Paris-set experimental novel *Hopscotch* (1963), and explorations of dream Paris by such writers as Baudelaire, André Breton and André Pieyre de Mandiargues.

Out 1 is a sprawling, barely navigable labyrinth of avenues, all the richer for including so many threads that lead nowhere – Berto's strand, in particular, seems for a long time like a random drift, unified by the actress's astonishingly potent wit and disruptive sexual energy (even more striking here than in *Céline and Julie*). For the most part, Frédérique's 'story' is a string of comic or sinister encounters – notably with a melancholic gay friend, Honeymoon (Michel

Berto), and a violent bike boy, 'Marlon' (a comically brutish Jean-François Stévenin, also working as assistant director). But, as Rivette points out, the film's narrative premise is merely a pretext to make such encounters happen. The idea of the conspiracy (a theme running through his films from *Paris nous appartient* to 2007's *Don't Touch the Axe*, which revisits Balzac's 'Story of the Thirteen') is, he explains, a mere excuse to make things happen.

Yet the idea of the paranoid investigation, the search for hidden explanations for the way the world works, not only motivates *Out 1* as one of cinema's greatest fictions about storytelling itself, it also voices a particular anxiety about social motivation in post-1968 France. Frédérique and Colin represent a lost generation of youth searching for adult figures who may be benevolent or not, but whose supposed string-pulling and will to direct (in every sense) would give some shape to the formlessness of lived existence, a formlessness *Out 1* at once confronts and yet revels in. (The film's 253-minute concise version, *Spectre*, imposes order by jettisoning much of the theatre, reshuffling scenes and losing some loose ends, including the tragic and extremely cloak-and-dagger climax of Frédérique's story.)

The whole story of *Out 1*, then, is of various rival attempts to impose a 'map' on life, and on Paris. What the supposed conspiracy consists of, no one really knows – but the search for it elevates the device of the arbitrary Hitchcockian macguffin to something like a universal metaphysical principle. Rivette's map-making, fiction-spinning tendencies come to the fore again in 1980's more concise, only partly

'Out 1' is a sprawling, barely navigable labyrinth of avenues, all the richer for including so many threads that lead nowhere

successful *Le Pont du Nord*, which comes across rather as a depressive after-echo of *Céline and Julie*. There's an echo, too, of *Out 1* in the return of Bulle Ogier, this time playing Marie, a former militant fresh out of prison and claustrophobically unable to step indoors. She teams up with a mysterious young woman, Baptiste, a motorbiking ninja free spirit played by Bulle's daughter, the late Pascale Ogier, who comes across here as airily fragile, not yet attaining the chic spikiness she would sport in Rohmer's *Full Moon in Paris* (1984). The two women tangle with Stévenin again and Pierre Clémenti in a story – cooked up by Rivette, the two leads and Suzanne Schiffman – involving a suitcase full of newspaper cuttings and a map of Paris superimposed with the figure of the 'Jeu de l'Oie', or 'Goose Game', which turns the whole city into a sort of hopscotch grid.

There's virtually nothing in *Le Pont du Nord* to turn the duo's wanderings and often whimsical dialogues into a cohesive narrative as such. Yet the very idea of imposing the game grid on to Paris makes the city itself a playing board, just as it was a vast stage for impromptu theatre in *Out 1*. The most innocuous locations, demarcated as game 'squares', become sites of safety, danger or magic, just as the Zone in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), once named as such, ceases to be just a landscape and becomes an ineffably alien space. Rivette's Paris, in *Le Pont du Nord* as in so many of his films, becomes just such a dream place, existing both on the periphery of and between the cracks of the city we think we know. That, more than the relationship between Marie and Baptiste, is the fascination of *Le Pont du Nord* – the exploration of an eerily deserted city of dead zones, both modern and archaic, the anti-Paris within Paris, the outdoor counterpart to all the staircases, ateliers and *arrière-boutiques* or backrooms of *Out 1*. Rivette's city films are, in a sense, the haunted backroom behind the *nouvelle vague*'s commercially appealing shopfront, and with the DVD release of *Out 1* we can now begin to properly unpack their mysterious treasures. 



Tales from the city: *Le Pont du Nord*

New releases

AT LONG LAST LOVE

Peter Bogdanovich; USA 1975; 20th Century Fox; Region A Blu-ray; 123 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: trailer

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Oh, but wouldn't we love to bring a fresh and re-evaluating eye and a blast of righteous retrospective praise to this persecuted 70s outcast, particularly in light of how it spearheaded that oddest American New Wave paradigm – the young, gritty auteurs (Bogdanovich, Scorsese, Coppola) exploding with movie love and cashing in their chips on big-budgeted musical anachronisms, only to see their dream films die on critics' lips and at the box office. Resurrecting *films maudits* unfairly crushed on their first release can be an addictive joy, but sometimes, even when the auteur restores his film to the original visionary length for a definitive Blu-ray edition, the verdict of the original heyday doesn't require much correction. Bogdanovich's career was shipwrecked, just years after he'd reached eminence, on the rocks of his old-Hollywood nostalgia, which translated to his blithe wish that 'modern' films could be as thematically vaporous and dependent on narrative efficiency and charm as the studio genre product of the Depression. This universally decried musical, erected around 16 old Cole Porter songs, is nothing if not a passionate attempt at eternal regress – its insistent faux-innocence scans today as almost pathological, a neurotic obsession with an impossible past.

A Cowardesque couple-swapping rondeau in terms of story, the movie is at the mercy of its modernity: pointlessly recorded live on set, inhabited by non-singers and non-dancers, over-festooned with glam costumes and designed like a tasteless black-lacquer-white-tile retro nightclub. The hopes for the film would still be meagre under the best circumstances, but Bogdanovich proved at a stroke that loving old golden-age movies is not at all the same as knowing how to make them.

On one level it seems as though the casting alone crippled the project, but Burt Reynolds and Cybill Shepherd, though hardly pros in this milieu, aren't quite inept or unattractive. Their essential dullness is the director's fault, as proven by second-banana Madeline Kahn, who was no stranger to song-and-dance showstopping but who is just as vapid and uncomfortable here as her co-stars. The entire cast often look as though they'd rather not bother, and the film around them moves glacially (whereas golden-age comedies buzzed and zipped). Bogdanovich has no fluency with the genre's mechanics: the skimpily written comedy has the delicacy of slow-floating parade balloons, the dancing is barely choreographed, the camera placement is generally clumsy and there are roughly twice as many songs stopping the plot as there should be, giving the film the feel of an endless school play.

All the same, an argument could easily be made for Bogdanovich's leisurely boondoggle in relation to the hyper-edited mélange of *Chicago*, just as its silly Porter songs fare very well against the droning recitative, and the sweaty close-ups in which it is sung, of *Les Misérables*. It may well be that the musical was simply a meal best served before 1960, only ably reinvented after

that by the likes of Jacques Demy, and all else is folly. Bogdanovich may have been more of a fan than an artist, without the ironic strategies that can grease the difference belonging to Quentin Tarantino, but he may have only attempted the impracticable, as so many have after him, all for the love of the way things once were.

Disc: The Blu-ray lifts László Kovács's grainy emulsion right off the screen, perhaps too severely. Otherwise, a clean edition in the director's 'preferred' cut (five minutes longer) and devoid of inevitably bad-news extras.

BURNT BY THE SUN 2

Nikita Mikhalkov; Russia 2010/11; Arrow Films/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 297 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 anamorphic

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Nikita Mikhalkov's belated two-part sequel to *Burnt by the Sun* (1994) was a gargantuan critical and commercial flop at home and barely opened internationally. While some of the opprobrium was clearly a reaction against a heavyhandedly nationalistic marketing campaign and Mikhalkov's politics in general (his fervent support for Vladimir Putin, his domination of many key film-industry bodies), much of the first part, 'Exodus', does indeed constitute one of the most ill-conceived cinematic follies in living memory.

Its tone can be gauged by an opening dream in which a rheumy-eyed Stalin is suffocated by a large cake bearing his visage rendered in chocolate, and a sequence in which a Luftwaffe pilot attempts to defecate on to a ship full of wounded soldiers (Red Cross vessels being protected by the Geneva Conventions). By the time this image is reached, it appears to be a metaphor for what Mikhalkov seems hell-bent on doing to his original film. Clearly intending a hallucinatory nightmare along the lines of *Catch-22*, *Apocalypse Now* and *Come and See* (the last explicitly quoted), Mikhalkov's overblown approach topples the film into outright farce (wobbly CGI effects don't help), and the recurring Christian symbolism has the subtlety of a blunderbuss at ten paces.

But, surprisingly, it does get better. 'Exodus' has three parallel narratives, involving Mikhalkov's former Red Army hero Kotov (not shot at the end of the first film but merely incarcerated), his daughter Nadia (who has somehow aged from six to early twenties in just six years, thanks

to the continued casting of Mikhalkov's own daughter Nadezhda), and Kotov's wife's lover Dmitri (Oleg Menshikov), personally charged by Stalin with tracking down Kotov after his escape following a German bombing raid. These strands are increasingly entwined in the more focused second part, 'Citadel', which eschews much of the earlier bombast in favour of a combination of narrative and emotional closure (a mid-point scene even recalls the original film's slow-burning potency) and a moving-despite-itself climax in which 15,000 civilians are ordered to undertake a suicide mission for the good of the Motherland. Its outcome is wildly implausible, but those who have stayed the five-hour course will have long since strung up all disbelief.

Disc: Each part gets its own disc, and the transfers are fine. 'Exodus' is presented in the international cut, half an hour shorter than the Russian cinema version.

FILMS BY BRIAN DE PALMA

DRESSED TO KILL

USA 1980; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 105 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: interviews, 'making of' documentary, trailer, booklet

BLOW OUT

USA 1981; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 107 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: interviews, stills gallery, trailer, booklet

Reviewed by James Blackford

There are two Brian De Palmas. One is a sure-handed director of mainstream fare; the other is an idiosyncratic auteur of flamboyant horror-thrillers who is notorious for pilfering the themes and techniques of other filmmakers (most obviously Hitchcock).

Made at the height of his powers, *Dressed to Kill* and *Blow Out* see De Palma in fully fledged auteur mode, brazenly positing himself as the new 'master' of cinematic thrills and spills. They capture the director at his most audaciously impressive and absurdly frustrating; with their paper-thin plausibility, cartoonish characters, virtuoso style and grandiose set pieces, these are wilfully fanciful works – magnificent manifestos of anti-realism that celebrate film as a syntax of illusion and artifice.

Dressed to Kill stars Angie Dickinson as Kate Miller, a sexually frustrated housewife whose tentative first dalliance with infidelity sees her slashed to death by a dress-wearing, razor-wielding maniac. Michael Caine plays the killer: Kate's psychiatrist Dr Elliott, a homicidal cross-dresser with a split personality, whose transgender persona (Bobbi) violently rebels every time he becomes aroused by a woman.

Dressed to Kill steals from *Psycho*, most obviously in its gratuitous shower scenes and by killing off its star early on, but with its fetishistically attired killer and pulse-racing murder sequences, the film also borrows from the *gialli* of Dario Argento. The opening half-hour, which follows Kate over the course of her last, ill-fated morning, sees De Palma make expert use of Hitchcockian POV and reverse shots to align the viewer's perspective and emotions with Dickinson's protagonist. It's an approach exemplified by the celebrated 'museum sequence', where Kate's seduction by a dashing lover (who unwittingly leads



Bobbi dazzler: Nancy Allen in *Dressed to Kill*



CLASS REVOLUTION

Fifty years ago, a teen sitcom about a wholesome all-American hero became the surprising template for later satires of suburban malaise

THE MANY LOVES OF DOBIE GILLIS

CBS; USA 1959-63; Shout! Factory/Region 1 DVD; 60 hours; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: pilot footage, episodes of 'Love That Bob!' and 'The Stu Erwin Show'

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

"High school is closer to the core of the American experience than anything else I can think," wrote Kurt Vonnegut in his introduction to *Our Time Is Now: Notes from the High School Underground*, an anthology of writing from radical student newspapers. And what does this have to do with *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, a teen sitcom that aired for four seasons on CBS, from 1959 to 1963? Well, where do you think the high-school underground had its roots?

No boy who watched the first season of *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* failed to fall in love with Thalia Menninger, played with livewire vivacity by 16-year-old Tuesday Weld – but there was rather more going on here than the erecting of teen idols. Thalia is a mercenary, avaricious young thing who demands material proof before affection: "Love doesn't butter any parsnips," she tells her doting swain Dobie. Dwayne Hickman plays penniless Dobie; he's clean-cut, all-American, blindingly well-scrubbed under the white-blond Kewpie quiff he wears in the first season, and full of maybe a little too much pep, for his enthusiastic ardour frequently comes across as a species of desperate, boggleheaded dementia. This gets at the general tenor of the programme: an aw-shucks wholesomeness just on the brink of hysteria.

Of course, pandemonium is always packed away before the credits roll. The sitcom, returning to its starting point at the end of each episode, is essentially a Sisyphean form – and, in this sense, rather true to life. The typical *Dobie* episode poses a problem, which Dobie presents to the audience in a direct address – a modern technique one associates with teen comedy after 1986's *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*: "My romance with Thalia is kind of a triangle," says Dobie, "I love her and she loves money." Dobie wants a girl, but to get to the girl, he first needs to get cash or some form of cultural capital. The problem is that Dobie has no real talent, and he can't pry money from his greengrocer parents, played by Florida Friebus and ex-vaudevillian Frank Faylen, whose catchphrase is, I swear to God, "I gotta kill that boy, I just gotta!" (*Father Knows Best* this ain't).

Adding to the sense that this is a sitcom teetering on the brink of a fault line in the American psyche, Dobie's best friend is a spaced-out beatnik wearing a goatee and a threadbare sweatshirt, Maynard G. Krebs (Bob Denver, later of *Gilligan's Island* fame). None other than



Radical roots: Dwayne Hickman as Dobie, with Bob Denver as beatnik best friend Maynard

Warren Beatty appears as Dobie's nemesis, snide and self-satisfied local aristocrat Milton Armitage, who effortlessly has money and talent and girls. Some of the best early episodes directly pit Dobie against Milton. In 'The Sweet Singer of Central High', a tonsillectomy gives Dobie Presley-like pipes, while 'The Fist Fighter' is a sharp send-up of TV westerns. In 'The Best-Dressed Man', a delirious comic pinnacle, Dobie and Milton turn themselves into clothes-horse fops, parading into the classroom for the inspection and approbation of Thalia, who gurgles and coos in a manner predicting Weld's

There is a sense that this is a sitcom teetering on the brink of a fault line in the American psyche



Stars are born: Tuesday Weld and Warren Beatty

orgasmic transports over cashmere sweaters in George Axelrod's *Lord Love a Duck* (1966). In many ways, *Dobie* blazed the trail for later satires of suburban materialism such as Axelrod's, few sitcoms having been so forthright about the American caste system and its discontents.

Throughout the series's run, the house style – a surrealism-tinged farcical humour that occasionally broke into outright outré science fiction – was maintained by a crew including writer Max Shulman, whose 1951 collection of short stories was the original basis for the show. Shout! Factory's box-set attests to the generally high level of quality that was maintained, including all 147 half-hour episodes on 21 DVDs, with episodes from Hickman's pre-*Dobie* sitcoms *Love That Bob!* and *The Stu Erwin Show* among the extras.

Weld left to become, in the words of Sam Shepard, "the female Marlon Brando", and Beatty, replaced by Steve Franken, left to become Warren Beatty. After a stint in the peacetime army, even Dobie and Maynard left Central High – for St Peter Pryor Junior College, where things were much the same, with Sheila James Kuehl's Zelda Gilroy, the one girl who loved Dobie unconditionally and whom he customarily treated like garbage, still nipping at his heels. (They were still happily married in the 1988 TV movie *Bring Me the Head of Dobie Gillis*.) And it's worth noting that even Denver left the show briefly, replaced for a couple of season-one episodes by Michael J. Pollard – meaning that a goodly chunk of the cast of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* was at one point on the show. Didn't I tell you this was the breeding ground for a revolution? ☹

New releases

her into the killer's grasp) becomes a six-minute 'symphony of looks' filmed largely with a gliding Steadicam. But other flashy techniques (split-screen for example) are deployed to gimmicky effect and the film suffers slightly outside its set pieces from ill-placed attempts at ribald comedy and from the mannered performances of supporting players Nancy Allen and Dennis Franz (who play the film's prostitute amateur sleuth and the obligatory tough New York detective, respectively).

With *Blow Out*, De Palma extended his references beyond Hitchcock to Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) and Coppola's *The Conversation* (1974) while also making allusions to the real-life political controversies of the era. *Blow Out* is a film about layers of truth and the filmmaking process. It follows a B-movie sound-effects man (John Travolta) who inadvertently tapes the murder of a political candidate and then, as with David Hemmings in *Blow-Up*, strives to recreate the 'truth' of those crucial moments from the evidence he has recorded. *Blow Out* boasts some of De Palma's finest work – the central set piece in which Travolta records the car-crash assassination is a triumph of film narration purely through images (without dialogue), as is the suspenseful slow-motion finale. The film also benefits from a strong, naturalistic performance from Travolta, who invests the film's tragic final scenes with an emotional verisimilitude rare for a De Palma film. However, *Blow Out* is again frustratingly disjointed, suffering from long digressive scenes and overbearing, unconvincing performances from returning De Palma regulars Allen (again playing an escort) and Franz (her pimp). Like *Dressed to Kill* it represents the best and worst aspects of De Palma's idiosyncratically anti-realist aesthetic.

Disc: Arrow's dual-format editions present both films on Blu-ray in immaculate High Definition transfers. Extras include 'making of' featurettes, interviews with cast members, original trailers and fully illustrated booklets.

FILMS BY ATOM EGOPYAN

NEXT OF KIN

US 1984; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 70 minutes

FAMILY VIEWING

US 1988; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 86 minutes

SPEAKING PARTS

US 1989; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 93 minutes

THE ADJUSTER

US 1991; Artificial Eye/Region B Blu-ray/
Region 2 DVD; Certificate 18; 102 minutes

Reviewed by Philip Concannon

The earliest films in a director's career aren't always useful indicators of what kind of filmmaker he or she will become, but with his first features Atom Egoyan established a distinct artistic vision and a set of preoccupations that he would go on to develop and pursue over the next three decades. Egoyan has always been fascinated by family relationships, the inability to communicate, role-playing, technology and sex, and each of these subjects is touched upon in some way in *Next of Kin* (1984), *Family Viewing*

(1988), *Speaking Parts* (1989) and *The Adjuster* (1991). To watch these films chronologically is to witness a young filmmaker steadily growing more confident in his abilities and increasingly curious about the mysteries of human nature.

Egoyan's prime fixation in this early portion of his career is the impact technology can have on our relationships and on our perception of the world, and videotapes are the key catalyst here. His first two films, *Next of Kin* and *Family Viewing*, are almost companion pieces, as both pictures follow a young man who drifts away from his unhappy home situation and attempts to rebuild a new family for himself elsewhere. *Next of Kin*'s Peter (Patrick Tierney) stumbles across a video of an Armenian family lamenting the loss of the boy they gave up for adoption as an infant and decides to present himself as their son, living a lie in order to fill the void in all their lives, while in *Family Viewing* a similarly inscrutable young protagonist, Van (Aidan Tierney, in his only acting role), turns against his father after discovering that he has been taping over Van's childhood memories with homemade sex tapes. Egoyan uses these narratives to explore the slippery nature of truth and identity, with many of his characters hiding their true nature or presenting a false persona to the world. In *Next of Kin*, Peter is always playing a part, only revealing himself completely when he speaks his thoughts into a tape recorder, and *Family Viewing* is similarly focused on role-playing and mistaken identities.

Although *Next of Kin* is a very commendable debut film, built on fertile ideas and a strong personal resonance (Egoyan rejected his Armenian heritage as a teenager, before reconciling with it years later), it still feels a little tentative, and *Family Viewing* is a huge advance on it in a number of ways, with Egoyan tackling

a much more complex narrative and adopting a more creative aesthetic. The domestic scenes are shot on video, making them resemble a TV soap, and the television being watched by the family is integrated into the soundtrack so that the canned laughter of a sitcom or a documentary voiceover appears to be commenting on their behaviour. The leap made between this film and *Speaking Parts*, however, is even more impressive. Egoyan opens his third film with a wordless seven-minute sequence that introduces the key players without giving us any idea who they are or how they relate to each other. He is happy to take his time sharing the key information that will allow us to piece together this puzzling plot, but the fact that the film remains so engrossing as it confounds us is a testament to his provocative, imaginative direction and his excellent cast (particularly Gabrielle Rose, who excels as a screenwriter being written out of her own life story).

Speaking Parts is Egoyan's most potent examination of our relationship with video, as his characters only seem capable of truly interacting with each other through this filter (it also feels oddly prescient – one sex scene via video plays like a proto-Skype set-up). This tactic of developing his central relationships while his characters remain at arm's length is a delicate balancing act that he pulls off with aplomb, but it's a trick he fails to repeat quite as successfully in *The Adjuster*. This is another film in which he presents us with behaviour or situations that seem inexplicable before later providing the context that will allow us to make sense of them, but there's something laboured and faintly trying about his deliberate construction here. *The Adjuster* still contains numerous individually brilliant and eccentric scenes, but they don't coalesce satisfyingly



Emil and the Detectives The film offers a fascinating picture of early-1930s Berlin street life, and the child actors give refreshingly unmannered performances

enough and there's a sense that Egoyan has pushed his approach as far as it will go. Following this film, Egoyan made a well-timed stylistic departure with 1993's experimental semi-documentary *Calendar*, which seemed to have a liberating effect on him and paved the way for the most widely successful period of his career. Nevertheless, these stimulating and ambitious early films are worth revisiting.

Disc: Released separately, all four films surely look as good as they ever have done, but the complete absence of extras is disappointing.

ELSTREE STORY

Gilbert Gunn; UK 1952; Network/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 61 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'Revisiting the Elstree Story'

Reviewed by Josephine Botting

Up-and-coming actor Richard Todd takes us on a tour of Elstree Studios in celebration of its 25th anniversary. Intended to form part of the 1951 Festival of Britain, the film wasn't completed in time – no doubt due to the lengthy research undertaken by director Gilbert Gunn, who apparently spent four months watching 200 of the 300 films shot at the studio to select clips for inclusion. These aim to illustrate the most exciting movies and best performances from Elstree's first quarter of a century and pick out some of the stars who began their careers there, including Margaret Lockwood, James Mason and a young actor called Spike Mullen, who later rose to fame as Ray Milland.

The clips are the least interesting aspect, however – with DVD and Blu-ray, the films featured here are easier to access now than in the 1950s. Instead, *Elstree Story* comes to life in its depiction of a contemporary studio at work, as those behind the scenes (who are uncredited and voiced by actors) describe their roles. Cameraman, scriptwriter, projectionist and casting director reflect on their jobs and on the changes in filmmaking since the pre-talkie days; Louis Levy conducts in the scoring theatre; Bob Clark makes up Joan Dowling for her role in *Murder Without Crime*; and builders and painters create lavish sets. In this, *Elstree Story* offers a fascinating insight into the British film industry of the period.

Disc: Film quality and transfer are good.

A newly filmed extra, *Revisiting the Elstree Story*, is cheaply shot but informative.

EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES

Gerhard Lamprecht; Germany 1931; BFI/Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 69 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 1935 British remake, booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Emil und die Detektive, Erich Kästner's first and best-known novel, originally published in 1929, has enjoyed multiple film and TV adaptations over the years. But the first film version, directed in 1931 by Gerhard Lamprecht and scripted by Billie (sic) Wilder with uncredited help from Emeric Pressburger and Kästner himself, is widely reckoned the best.

The story, to be frank, is pretty thin. Young Emil travels to Berlin to visit his grandmother, entrusted by his mother with a hard-earned 140 marks for the old lady. On the train, a sinister man in a bowler hat (Fritz Rasp, always adept



Capital tales: *Finisterre*

at smiling villainy) drugs and robs him. In the city Emil meets up with a lively band of street kids who help him tail the villain and finally deliver him to the cops. Emil returns home a hero. But Lamprecht, a prolific veteran whose filmography runs from 1920 to 1958, makes a workmanlike job of his material, occasionally upping the imaginative ante with an expressionist, drug-induced nightmare sequence.

The film offers a fascinatingly detailed picture of early-1930s Berlin street life, and the child actors – if rather too well-behaved for urban street kids – give refreshingly unmannered performances. Emil's triumphant return home, though, with brass bands and civic speeches, goes on way too long. This is less of a problem in the 1935 UK remake, long thought lost, where the whole apotheosis is over in 50 seconds. Otherwise the UK version reruns the original almost shot for shot, even lifting some footage and using the identical bouncy march when the kids hound the villain through the streets. London geography, as usual in the movies, is treated in haphazard fashion.

Disc: The German film offers a clean, clear transfer. The British film, extensively restored, still shows some projector damage and seems to be missing about ten minutes of footage.

HISTORY OF THE EAGLES PARTS 1 & 2

Alison Ellwood; USA 2012; Universal/Region B Blu-ray/Region 0 DVD; Certificate 15; 187 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Alex Gibney was commandeered to put together this documentary about the Californian group whose greatest-hits collection was the bestselling album of the 20th century. Gibney ended up producing the film, which was directed by Alison Ellwood. They may have been filmmakers for hire but they've put together a portrait of the band that's both fascinating as social history and honest as to the reasons behind the many bust-ups the group endured.

The Eagles were originally the product of the Los Angeles music scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The two key members, Glenn Frey and Don Henley, were former backing singers for Linda Ronstadt. Following the example of their old friend and mentor Jackson Browne, Frey and Henley became disciplined and very effective songwriters, but Frey in particular yearned for them to have an edge – to be subversive rockers with plenty of bad attitude. Their misfortune – if it can be described as such

– is that they remained relentlessly middle-of-the-road. They may have released songs with titles like 'Desperado', taken the mandatory amount of drugs and trashed the occasional hotel room, but what audiences responded to were their harmonies, not their rebelliousness.

Ellwood and Gibney make it absolutely clear that the band was far from democratic. Frey and Henley were always top dogs and were very conscious of their earnings – and Frey is still withering in his contempt for former bandmate Don Felder, even if Felder did co-write the band's most famous song, 'Hotel California'.

"It's something that you can't do forever. This is not a lifetime's career that we can do," a youthful Henley is shown saying in archive footage early in the film. Of course, in the age of adult rock radio stations when your audiences grow old with you and your music never disappears, The Eagles are proof that some bands do indeed last forever.

The DVD is split into two films. The first – the one premiered at Sundance – takes us up until the band's break-up, when they famously quipped that it would take until "hell freezes over" for them to come together again. The second film follows their solo careers (Frey is responsible for the 80s anthem 'The Heat Is On') to the inevitable reunion (for the Hell Freezes Over tour) and their continuing success in the present day. At its best, the film has the same richness as Martin Scorsese's recent films on Bob Dylan and George Harrison.

Disc: The Blu-ray contains unseen concert footage but the standard DVD edition comes without extras.

A LONDON TRILOGY – THE FILMS OF SAINT ETIENNE 2003-2007

FINISTERRE/WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TODAY MERVYN DAY?/THIS IS TOMORROW

Paul Kelly and Kieran Evans/Paul Kelly/Paul Kelly; UK 2003/2005/2007; BFI/Region 0 DVD; Certificate PG; 59/45/54 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1; Features: 'Banksy in London'; 'Monty the Lamb'; 'The Other South Bank'; 'Seven Summers'; 'Today's Special'; essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Quietly hymning the delights of the ever-decaying and regenerating capital on film (rather than in their music, Kinks or Madness style), indie-dance pioneers Saint Etienne and director Paul Kelly have established a meditative, music-laced, look-at-London documentary niche of their own. Keen to create films chewier and more considerable than the 1990s MTV-fluff promos, Kelly (working here with Kieran Evans) and Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley initially cooked up *Finisterre*, a minimalist 'city symphony' of London life. Self-confessedly influenced by Patrick Keiller's *flâneur*-feast *London* (1994) and Norman Cohen's eccentric cultural treasure-hunt *The London Nobody Knows* (1969), its USP is its wry and oddly hopeful mood – London as The Great When. Kelly's long-shots roam watchfully over swarming commuters, neon-lit gigs or the urban pastoral of the Regent's Canal, while atmospheric electronica and Sarah Cracknell's wistful vocals infuse them with longing. But it's usefully salted, too, by the astringent or self-mocking voiced asides of musicians like Nick Sanderson, Mark Perry and pop



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star cum postman Vic Goddard, waxing lyrical about his round. Follow-up film *What Have You Done Today Mervyn Day?* adopts a slender spine of drama, weaving after Noah Kelly's paperboy as he meanders around the largely derelict yards and algae-choked waterways of the Lower Lea Valley, memorialising it before the Olympic megalopolis was rolled out. If the overcrafted nostalgic narration of David Essex's 'Grandad' pales early on, the hidden history (the Lea Valley as the unsung birthplace of both plastics and petrol) and the film's nimble ambivalence about the redevelopment ('Fuck you IOC' graffiti slides past the camera) catch on to you like a burr. Both *Mervyn Day* and *This Is Tomorrow*, Saint Etienne and Kelly's film essay on the refurbishment of the Royal Festival Hall, were shot to be shown as live performance pieces, so there's a discernible difference in their visual and aural rhythms. *This Is Tomorrow* rolls together a fond, archive-rich memorial to the optimistic modernism of the Festival of Britain, with a paean of praise for the modern workmen ("a masterpiece" of internal scaffolding explored like a giant artwork). Like the rest of the trilogy, it is passionate about the importance of London's public spaces, artist Jeremy Deller delivering a eulogy to the RFH as a "free space, in a London that's being divided up and privatised". As *Finisterra's* unseen narrator insists: "Nothing's too good for the ordinary people."

Disc: Despite very small differences in image quality in sections of *What Have You Done Today Mervyn Day?*, the transfers are uniformly good. Crammed with Kelly's short London films, the box-set also includes plums like *Monty the Lamb*, his affectionate portrait of non-league Hendon FC, and that trio of mini-memorials for London's post-war cafés, *Today's Special*. Enjoyable essays by Sukhdev Sandhu, Owen Hatherley and Tom Dyckhoff (musing on the eternal-1970s vibe of the Lea Valley).

MARKETA LAZAROVA

František Vlácil; Czechoslovakia 1967; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 165 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1; Features: interviews, booklet, storyboards, trailer, documentaries

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

By now, this burly, seething musk ox of a movie, arguably the most convincing film about the Middle Ages ever made, should be on everyone's tongue. Essentially cinema non grata everywhere until the Czechs restored it and voted it their best ever in 1998, Vlácil's elliptical nightmare about warring medieval tribes has been undergoing a global re-evaluation, travelling with a Vlácil retrospective in 2002, getting a handful of DVD releases in Europe, and now a full-on Criterion edition. Newcomers, which is almost everyone, will be dazzled and baffled in turn; Vlácil's strategy in adapting Vladislav Vancura's apparently untranslatable novel was to craft an impressionistic odyssey that elides just as much narrative information as it imparts. (Repeat viewings clarify the story substantially.) In the process, the muscular physical-visual assault on hand, photographed with widescreen gothic contrast by Bedrich Batka, manifests a vast, chaotic pagan world like no other film experience, and its impact can give you cause to start arguing



Marriage breakdown, Zulawski-style: *Possession*

about 'pure cinema' all over again. Is it the best Czech film? Maybe – at the very least it'll rewrite your ideas of what the Eastern Bloc New Waves were capable of, and obliterate any reservations you might harbour about the potential veracity and edgy artfulness of historical costume epics.

Disc: The new 4K digital restoration gives this startlingly graphic pageant a fierce and heretofore unseen immediacy, especially in Blu-ray, and the extras provide just the right amount of context. The curious history of the film's ambitious production and subsequent non-splash is limned by an indispensable essay by scholar Tom Gunning and multiple interviews with cast, crew and, in a 1989 TV documentary that may've been one of the first Velvet Revolution signs of Czech love for the movie, Vlácil himself. Particularly enlightening is a sit-down with historian and Czech film scholar Peter Hames, who parses out the film's tempestuous relationship with historical accuracy, syntactical orthodoxy and Czech culture in the 60s.

PASSION

Brian De Palma; Germany/France 2012; Metrodome Distribution/Region 2 DVD; 100 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by David Jenkins

Suffering the same ignoble fate as 2002's sublime *Femme Fatale*, Brian De Palma's latest arrives on UK shores as a direct-to-DVD special. Which is a cryin' shame, as nestled within this svelte, kinky remake of Alain Corneau's directorial swansong *Love Crime* (2010) are some of the most riveting, articulate set pieces you're likely to see on a screen (of any size) this year. Two women are engaged in a corporate battle of attrition, a wipe-clean glass-and-steel advertising agency in Berlin their gladiatorial amphitheatre. In the brunette corner is Noomi Rapace's creative underling Isabelle, who just wants to get credit for her ideas, while over in the blonde corner is Rachel McAdams's ice-queen middle-manager Christine, whose easy recourse to confrontation and humiliation stymies all who seek to topple her.

As with De Palma films like *Redacted* (2007), *Blow Out* (1981) and *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Passion* explores how the recorded image, when contextualised correctly, can, as much as a knife, be employed for purposes of malice. The camouflaged camera phone becomes a tool of ad hoc sexual voyeurism, online video chat negates the one-on-one privacy of a voice call, and embarrassing CCTV footage can drive a person to violent despair. The film can be split into two

distinct chapters: part one could be called 'theory' and part two 'practice'. A meandering and slightly stilted opening act acquires greater significance on a second viewing, particularly as it becomes clear that De Palma's lightly politicised insights into media manipulation have all been a ruse in which – akin to *Hi, Mom!*'s Be Black Baby sequence – the viewer becomes psychologically complicit through the director's own off-kilter trial-by-movie-camera. More than the cheapjack erotic thriller many have dismissed it as, *Passion* is a hymn to the mischievous nature of cinema, a tool of such diversity, malleability and sensuality that no camera phone could ever hope to replace it.

Disc: No extras.

POSSESSION

Andrzej Zulawski; France/West Germany 1981; Second Sight/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 18; 124 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: commentaries by Zulawski and co-writer Frederic Tuten, documentaries ('The Other Side of the Wall'; 'Repossessed'; 'A Divided City'; 'The Sounds of Possession'; 'Our Friend in the West'; 'Basha'), Zulawski interview, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Despite being critically garlanded (Cannes and César awards for Best Actress), Polish maverick Andrzej Zulawski's only English-language film got caught up in the 'video nasty' moral panic of the early 1980s, ending up on the DPP's notorious hit list. This fact alone encapsulates how hard it is to pigeonhole *Possession* – it's simultaneously an agonisingly raw (and painfully autobiographical) study of the disintegration of a marriage, a political suspense thriller (it's set in Cold War-era Berlin, with the Wall a constant background presence), a study in geographical, emotional and spiritual alienation, and a vertiginous descent into full-on Cronenbergian body horror which, *en passant*, includes an image that inspired Zulawski's unsuccessful attempt at coaxing funding out of Paramount Pictures by describing it memorably but not strictly accurately as "a film about a woman who fucks an octopus".

With so much whirling around them (not least an endlessly moving camera), Sam Neill's Mark and Isabelle Adjani's Anna have to shriek to be heard – at least when they're not attempting self-mutilation with an electric carving knife or, in Adjani's case, undergoing an almost ritualised breakdown in a dank, dripping underpass accompanied by an eruption of red, white and green fluids from multiple orifices which might signal a miscarriage or something else entirely. As with David Lynch's far less frenzied but not entirely dissimilar *Eraserhead* (1977), Zulawski seems to be trying to get to the very heart of what makes human relationships function (or otherwise), fusing their physical and psychological aspects in ways that defy strict biological sense but nonetheless seem unnervingly plausible. 'Confrontational' is a barely adequate term to describe Zulawski's approach, but there's no doubting his underlying seriousness of purpose.

Disc: Masterminded by long-term Zulawski acolyte Daniel Bird, this project is an obvious labour of love. Less aggressively blue-tinted than previous video releases, the all-but-flawless high-definition transfer reveals details hidden

since the film's 35mm outings. A trunkload of extras includes two commentaries (by Zulawski and co-writer Frederic Tuten) and several fascinating documentaries exploring the film itself, its Berlin locations, its soundtrack, its poster designer Barbara 'Basha' Baranowska and the often eye-opening differences between the original version and the notoriously mangled US cut. (The above applies to the Blu-ray; Second Sight's older DVD release is still available, but far less lavishly appointed.)

SAFETY LAST!

Fred C. Newmeyer/Sam Taylor; USA 1923; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 73 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: two music scores, short films ('Take a Chance,' 'Young Mr Jazz,' 'His Royal Slyness'), commentary by Leonard Maltin and Richard Correll, introduction by Suzanne Lloyd, documentaries, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Recently quoted in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*, Harold Lloyd's best-known feature includes perhaps the iconic image from cinema's first three decades, that of a man clinging desperately to a disintegrating clock many storeys above street level. Despite the extras revealing that the lengthy sequence in which Lloyd climbs the front of a building unaided wasn't quite as *cinéma vérité* as legend has printed, there's no doubt that he was in genuinely mortal peril on several occasions, and it's hard to imagine a present-day insurance company sanctioning anything similar – as demonstrated by the restrictions placed on Jackie Chan (an ardent Lloyd fan who became his last true successor) when he succumbed to Hollywood's siren call. Ninety years on, much of it remains heartstoppingly thrilling, even if today's more savvy audiences are less likely to need medical assistance.

It's easy to forget the 50-minute build-up but, from the opening *trompe l'oeil* shot that establishes the general theme of fatalism and despair, *Safety Last!* is an impeccable piece of film construction, giving us an extensive tour of the inside of the Bolton Building before Lloyd attempts his external ascent – there are just as many perils lurking within, as Lloyd discovers when he mans the fabric counter of DeVore's department store, a fragile, vulnerable male helpless against an onrushing surge of terrifyingly impatient women.

Three supporting shorts, *Take a Chance* (1918), *Young Mr Jazz* (1919) and *His Royal Slyness* (1920), feature earlier incarnations of Lloyd's 'Glasses' character and chart the evolution of his films from rough-and-tumble knockabout to more sophisticated satire. In the last, his spitting-image resemblance to the Prince of Thermosa ends up fomenting revolution: the final scene is even more resonant now that the whole 20th century is behind us.

Disc: Lloyd's farsighted attitude to film preservation pays spectacular dividends with a sparkling transfer that's as good as any silent-film Blu-ray and considerably better than most. Two scores (Carl Davis, orchestral; Gaylord Carter, organ) begin a phenomenally generous extras package whose centrepiece, the Kevin Brownlow/David Gill documentary *Harold Lloyd: The Third Genius* (1989), is good enough to have earned a separate video release back in the day, although

the location tour and Davis's film-scoring masterclass are no less engrossing. All four Lloyd films (the shorts are also recent HD restorations) come with detail-crammed commentaries featuring his friend and archivist Richard Correll.

WHEELER & WOOLSEY RKO COMEDY CLASSICS COLLECTION

HALF SHOT AT SUNRISE/HOOK, LINE & SINKER/

CRACKED NUTS/CAUGHT PLASTERED/

HOLD 'EM JAIL/HIPS, HIPS, HOORAY/THE

NITWITS/MUMMY'S BOYS/HIGH FLYERS

Paul Sloane/Edward F. Cline/Edward F. Cline/

William A. Seiter/Norman Taurog/Mark Sandrich/

George Stevens/Fred Guiol/Edward F. Cline; USA

1930-37; Warner Archive/Region 1 DVD NTSC;

78/75/64/69/66/67/82/68/70 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A mainstay of 30s studio comedy we all never remembered to forget about entirely, Wheeler and Woolsey were one of RKO's reliable cash cows, churning out more than 20 features (and half a dozen shorts) for the studio in nine years, all of them manufactured with careless speed and borrowed tropes and unending puns. Bert Wheeler and Robert Woolsey were Broadway and vaudeville vets who established early-talkie careers with, à la the Cocoanuts, the adaptation of their Zeigfeld-produced stage hit *Rio Rita*. And they were a queer pair, in film after film a mysteriously conjoined duo stumbling through Depression-era jobs and predicaments (bootlegging, car racing, song publishing, etc) and rarely acknowledging the existence of the fourth wall. Wheeler was the eager, romantic, childishy stupid naif, Woolsey the faux-savvy, fast-quipping ideas man, and their schtick was largely reactive to their situations – the pairing was an ephemeral phenomenon because the two characters had no

distinctive relationship and meant little to each other (their closest Hollywood approximation in terms of concept, Abbott and Costello, had at its core Bud Abbott's pugnacious cold-bloodedness), despite the gay subtext the films never quite shied away from, cluttered as they were with double entendres and phallic business – no one, not even George Burns, fellated cigars quite like Woolsey. The lack of a narrative dynamic meant that the scenarios could and did go anywhere, for any reason, and the scrambling screenwriters (mostly second-raters like Anne Caldwell, Tim Whelan and Ralph Spence, but also including Roscoe Arbuckle, S.J. Perelman, Harry Ruby and the Mankiewicz brothers) regularly threw anything at all into the pot, including conscientiously cheesy dance numbers, walk-on routines, near-nudity, romantic interludes and deus ex machina cyclones, ad infinitum.

The nine films packed into this four-disc set range from early-sound ramshackles such as 1930's WWI-expat farce *Half Shot at Sunrise* to the peak professionalism of 1934's *Hips, Hips, Hooray* to the descent of 1937's *High Flyers*, when RKO's strained talent pool was no longer expended on the team. Overall, the comedies are slipshod and varied, with occasionally inspired moments (as when, in the George Stevens-directed entry *The Nitwits*, the boys visit a girl in jail by masquerading on enormous stilts and visiting her high-alley-facing cell window, where a song ensues assisted by other convicts at their windows). But for the most part Wheeler and Woolsey remain fairly uninventive second-tier comics from their period, and their films get by on dogged irreverence rather than charm or wit.

Disc: Barebones archival prints that are most often fine, but sometimes lapse into fuzziness, visually and aurally. Not a spit of extras.



Safety Last! Ninety years on, it remains heartstoppingly thrilling... There's no doubt that Lloyd was in genuinely mortal peril on several occasions

Television

LAST RESORT

Big Sun/MiddKid Productions/ABC; USA 2012-2013; Sony Home Entertainment/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 596 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: 'Last Resort Declassified' featurettes

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

With *The Shield*, Shawn Ryan created what was probably TV's best police procedural since *Homicide: Life on the Street* (well, until the debut of *The Wire*, anyway). To play the lead in *Last Resort*, his oblique take on American imperialism masquerading as a seafaring nuclear thriller, Ryan looked to *Homicide*'s breakout star, the mighty Andre Braugher (supported by such *Shield* alumni as Jay Karnes and David Rees Snell). Braugher plays a submarine captain trialling new radar-busting technology, whose loyalty is sorely tested when ordered to nuke Pakistan. He is promptly branded a traitor and relieved of command, and when even his lieutenant (Scott Speedman) asks for ratification, the sub is shot at. Forced off the grid, the crew resurface at a Nato listening station on the island of Sainte Marina (actually Hawaii), where they face on-board mutinies and trouble on the ground from the locals. Back in Washington, meanwhile, politicians, arms dealers and families of the 'mutineers' scramble in what ultimately develops into an attempted coup d'état.

Despite clunky dialogue (maritime similes abound) and repetitive plotting to get the sub in jeopardy every week, there is also some smashing CGI (especially in the pilot, directed with his usual pizzazz by Martin Campbell, another *Homicide* veteran) and plenty of metatextual uplift in this topical riff on *Crimson Tide* and *Seven Days in May* for the Snowden, Assange and Bradley Manning era. Standout instalments include a chemical attack told in non-chronological order (incorporating a nice homage to *Vertigo*) and a genuinely nasty scenario where Pakistani commandos retaliate by taking the visiting families of the crew hostage. Despite swift cancellation, the nihilistic finale satisfyingly wraps up the story.

Disc: The image depth and clarity of the 5.1 audio are exemplary. Each episode has a brief behind-the-scenes doc attached.

THE MAN IN ROOM 17 – SERIES 1

Granada/ITV; UK 1965; Network/Region 2 DVD; 600 minutes;

Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: picture gallery

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Despite its contemporary Swinging 60s setting and being shot in Granada's trademark 'video noir' style, this engrossing show is a real throwback to the mastermind detective stories of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Richard Vernon's donnish Oldenshaw is the eponymous cloistered man, solving crimes without ever leaving his room, with only Michael Aldridge for company as his verbal sparring partner Dimmock. These scenes were scripted and directed independently of the main storyline taking place outside the room, and the concept is a winning one, incorporating the viewer's own landlocked 'armchair detective' status within the fabric of its conceit. The ingenious cases of murder and espionage solved by the 'Special Research Department' are redolent of such literary antecedents as G.K. Chesterton's



Last Resort There's plenty of metatextual uplift in this topical riff on 'Crimson Tide' and 'Seven Days in May' for the Snowden, Assange and Manning era

The Club of Queer Trades and Roy Vickers's *The Department of Dead Ends*, as well as Jacques Futrelle's 'The Problem of Cell 13', in which his 'Thinking Machine' detective proves that he can break out of jail simply through brainpower.

This is effectively two shows in one, the rarefied intellectual investigations nicely complementing the more standard thriller plots. It led to various spinoffs including *The Fellows*, *Spindoe* and *Big Breadwinner Hog*.

Disc: The black-and-white telerecordings are rough around the edges but in acceptable shape given their vintage.

THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE

Persistence of Visions/Alliance/London Films/CBS;

USA 1985-89; Shock/Region 2 DVD; Certificate

12; 2,294 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features:

deleted scenes, ad bumpers, stills galleries

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Rod Serling originally had to defend his use of such disreputable genres as fantasy, horror and SF in *The Twilight Zone* as a way of dodging interference from the sponsors. By the 1980s, when the anthology format had made a surprise resurgence, those genres had achieved commercial viability if not quite critical respectability. Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* was much trumpeted (though Jim Henson's *The Storyteller* was far superior), but

it was horrors such as *Tales from the Darkside* and *Tales from the Crypt* that won the ratings.

Of various revivals, including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *The Outer Limits*, the new *Twilight Zone* was probably the classiest in an iteration combining several stories per episode in the style of Serling's *Night Gallery*. Despite employing such movie directors as Wes Craven, Peter Medak and Martha Coolidge, the plain visual style compares badly with the original, though the writing is often top-notch. Eschewing harsh twist endings in favour of surprise and emotion, the standouts include fine adaptations of classic stories by Robert Silverberg ('To See the Invisible Man') and Tom Godwin ('The Cold Equations'), as well as imaginative studies of old age such as Harlan Ellison's 'Paladin of the Lost Hour', starring Danny Kaye, and J. Michael Straczynski's 'Dream Me a Life', as well as Rockne S. O'Bannon's moving 'Wordplay', in which a sales exec loses the ability to understand what those around him are saying. None may stretch the format further than Serling did (though 'Nightcrawlers', a Vietnam War allegory directed by William Friedkin, tried hard) but the show never disgraces the original either.

Disc: The transfer to disc is watchable but compromised, as the series was post-produced on tape, resulting in often very soft images suffering from that amber tinge so common to NTSC video of the day. Ⓢ

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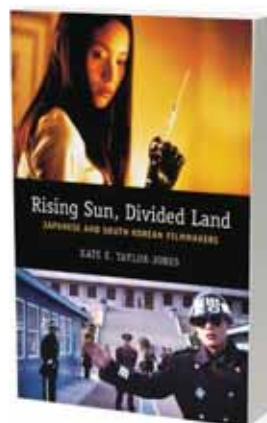
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Star-makers: stills, such as this one produced for Alla Nazimova in *Camille* (1921), could be as effective as onscreen performances at creating a star persona

SHIMMERING IN SOFT FOCUS

STILL

AMERICAN SILENT MOTION
PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHY

By David S. Shields, University of Chicago Press,
401pp, £35, ISBN 9780226013268

Reviewed by Ian Christie

Daniel Shields believes we've got a lot wrong on the photographic side of film history, beginning with the idea that movies launched a new era of pictorial glamour and ending with the paradox that "the still image... proved a more durable medium for preserving action, character, and personality than the motion picture". Materially, this latter point is perhaps obvious. Few who have encountered portraits of such silent-era stars as Lillian Gish or Louise Brooks, to name only the best-known today, can be immune to the radiant intensity they still communicate. By contrast, their surviving films are often degraded in photographic quality, due to repeated copying. Our images of these true 'stars' are

undoubtedly derived as much, if not more, from the still pictures that have survived much better than the movies that were their *raison d'être*.

Shields's book shimmers with exquisitely reproduced images of Gish, Brooks and dozens more protagonists of the era of glamour – almost all drawn from his own collection, as he explains, due to the exorbitant fees demanded for reproduction of images owned by studios and museums. But it aims to be much more than yet another celebration of Hollywood glamour. Indeed, Shields wants to rescue the word 'glamour' from its tired and ambiguous usages and to prove that it has a precise genealogy. Challenging John Kobal's assumption in *The Art of the Great Hollywood Portrait Photographers* (1980) that the glamour portrait emerged at the end of the 1920s, as talkies were superseding silent movies, Shields shifts the focus back to the 1890s, when 'professional beauties' such as Lily Langtry were replaced by "the girl", a creature who dominated the stage after 1894". Glamour was originally as much about settings and stories as people (Shields uses "persons"

rather archly throughout his book), although 20 years on it had coalesced in an intense, often 'soulful' style of portraiture that could catapult a determined girl into theatrical or screen stardom.

This style incorporated many of the techniques of photography's 'pictorialist' avant garde, with its subjects often simmering in soft focus against inky backgrounds. But above all, what it took from the new stage photography of the turn of the century was a sense of narrative. These portraits told a story, in suggestively visual terms. And Shields's mission is to rescue the forgotten artists and artisans who created the Hollywood glamour idiom by giving them auteur status. How many could identify Alfred Witzel, born in Deadwood, South Dakota, as the pioneer of Los Angeles portraiture, supplying the first film star portrait to appear in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1913? Or his early rival Fred Hartsook and their one-time employee Walter Seely, succeeded by Max Munn Autrey? And so many more biographies that make up the research core of the book.

Seely's soulful stills of Theda Bara in Fox's 1917 *Cleopatra* are virtually all that remain of

this lost film – and certainly make a stronger case for it than any faded or partial reconstruction ever could. They also prove that different photographers could, in effect, conjure different characters from the actors who were their raw material. The transformation of Theodosia Goodman from Ohio into the Vamp 'Theda Bara' owed much to Jack Freulich's widely reproduced character stills for *A Fool There Was* in 1915. And the subsequent career of the Polish-born Freulich, who became head of still photography at Carl Laemmle's Universal in 1919, goes some way to substantiating Shields's claims for the creative status of stills men. For it was Freulich and his protégé Bert Longworth who gave Universal's early cut-price stars their characteristic, often grotesque looks as the studio developed its Gothic bent.

Shields's expertise in this largely unknown world undoubtedly adds to our knowledge of how the Hollywood studios assiduously and competitively cultivated their human assets and captivated their audiences. But a stills-led approach to film history can also mislead, as it does in his highly selective account of Cecil B. DeMille's early career in Hollywood. Noting correctly that DeMille's 1914 debut *The Squaw Man* "seems singularly unimpressive" today, Shields claims that in 1916 *Joan the Woman*

Our images of early movie stars are derived as much, if not more, from stills than the movies that were their raison d'être

"brought into full flower DeMille's realist art", thanks in large part to the opera star Geraldine Farrar playing Joan as a "suffragette general". However this account ignores the fact that DeMille directed at least 22 intervening films, in the space of two-and-a-half frantically creative years; and that among these it was his 1915 *Carmen*, in which Farrar made her screen debut, that first demonstrated his directorial mastery, while the bold use of chiaroscuro 'Lasky lighting' was first used to sensational effect in another 1915 film, *The Cheat*. *Joan the Woman* may have convinced Lasky that "the still was the visual brand for motion pictures", but it was also an expensive flop, despite massive publicity efforts.

Not unreasonably, Shields wants to sidestep the ideological issues surrounding "visual pleasure" (in Laura Mulvey's famous formulation) derived from images of female allure, claiming, somewhat defensively, that "this is not a story of the male gaze and how it dominated the pictorial aesthetics of glamour". Given the sheer scale of still photography that embedded Hollywood glamour in the 20th century's collective psyche, he's surely right that it can't be reduced to any single story. What he has done, building on the pioneering work of Brownlow, Kobal and others, is open another window onto the pictorial revolution of the 'teens and 20s that made a new aesthetic of beauty accessible to the masses. 

DIFFICULT MEN

BEHIND THE SCENES OF A CREATIVE REVOLUTION: FROM 'THE SOPRANOS' AND 'THE WIRE' TO 'MAD MEN' AND 'BREAKING BAD'

By Brett Martin, Faber and Faber, 320pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780571303809

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Film culture has become so focused on directors that the broad shift of interest to television drama, of which Brett Martin's appropriately binge-worthy book is both product and history, entails a second, sharper change in perspective. For in TV, as *Mad Men* showrunner Matthew Weiner is quoted as saying, "The director means *nothing*." Martin's difficult men are the antiheroes of the shows named in the sub-subtitle and – even more so – their creators: David Chase, David Simon, Weiner and Vince Gilligan, as well as Alan Ball, David Milch and Shawn Ryan, showrunners respectively of *Six Feet Under*, *Deadwood* and *The Shield*. The role and working methods of each showrunner vary but all are writers elevated "to power and influence unheard of in the director-dominated film industry".

As Martin observes, writers tend to be thin-skinned and professionally jealous – in short, ill-suited to managing the intensively collaborative process of television production – and as a result *Difficult Men*, which is largely based on new interviews, is filled with juicy instances of the higher gossip. Martin is at his best describing the writers' rooms, some of which he has visited, where seasons are broken down into scenes or 'beats' before individual writers are assigned episodes, the draft scripts of which are then worked over by the showrunner. Even the team of novelists Simon assembled for *The Wire* – Richard Price, Dennis Lehane and George Pelecanos – had to get used to seeing as much as two-thirds of their work rewritten.

In one memorable passage, Martin describes Milch at work on *Luck*, performing for a small audience of junior writers and assistants "the kind of fitful process – adding emphasis here, cutting a word there, then replacing it, then cutting again – that most writers suffer alone



Men at work: James Gandolfini, David Chase

and in silence", but delegating the actual keystrokes to an underling because touching the keyboard "would be too powerful a trigger for his obsessive-compulsive tendencies".

The main arc of Martin's story, divided into the 13-part structure that has become the standard for seasons of cable drama, is the rise and stumble of the pay-cable HBO from its move into original hour-long drama programming in the late 1990s to the premature cancellation of *Deadwood* in 2006 and the subsequent departure of the two executives – Carolyn Strauss and Chris Albrecht – who greenlit its riskiest series. The last few chapters turn to two of the basic-cable channels that took up the baton: FX and AMC. Martin's thesis is that "[the] artistic triumphs of the Third Golden Age were the product of creative opportunism in the face of dislocation, confusion, and low stakes", but that their success has engendered a high-stakes, more risk-averse climate, "a structural problem, perhaps never to be overcome".

The recurring description of the present era as the "Third Golden Age" is consistent with the early parts of the book, which strive to create a convenient image of network TV before *The Sopranos* as a "dismal landscape", the First Golden Age having occurred in the medium's early days, the Second in the 1980s when the production company MTM Enterprises presided over "a brief period of unusual network excellence" with shows like *Hill Street Blues* and *St. Elsewhere*. The body of the book presents a more convincing and complicated picture, however, in which the cable "revolution" is foreshadowed in the network shows of the far from dismal 1990s, including *NYPD Blue*, *The X-Files*, *Homicide: Life on the Street* and the less well known *I'll Fly Away*.

While Martin acknowledges that he has had to "set parameters" to deal with the weight of material, the exclusive concentration on cable slightly skews his account of the "highbrow acceptance" of television, in which network dramas like *The West Wing*, not to mention sitcoms and sci-fi shows, played a significant role. Similarly, though he deplores the "chauvinism of the clock" that confines cable shows by and starring women to the half-hour format of *Weeds*, *Nurse Jackie* and *The Big C* – all on Showtime – the shorter running time isn't an adequate reason not to discuss them, or even necessarily an impairment. The half-hour *Sex and the City* – which debuted on HBO in 1998, the year before *The Sopranos* – is another openly avowed but still puzzling omission.

Chapter 13 ends with a brilliant evocation of life in the *Breaking Bad* writers' room, where three or four days are spent hashing out a scene for the season 4 episode 'Shotgun', in which two characters ride around the desert picking up packages of money deposited by a network of meth dealers. "Unfolding as a montage," Martin concludes, "it took up eighty-two seconds of screen time." "Somewhere along the line," tellingly, the scene lost its dialogue – but where exactly? Pace Weiner, a lot can happen between the writers' room and the editing suite, and that untold story deserves a season of its own. 

ALLAN DWAN (A DOSSIER)

Edited by David Phelps and Gina Telaroli, Lumière, 460pp, free downloadable e-book

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Things shift at a glacial pace within the canon but nobody can deny that Allan Dwan is having something of a critical-mass moment.

For decades, not a great deal was known of Dwan the man outside of that what Peter Bogdanovich uncovered when interviewing him in the late 1960s. In these interviews, the Toronto-born filmmaker described first-hand the rambunctious early days of the film industry – stories Bogdanovich subsequently published and freely pilfered for his 1976 film *Nickelodeon*. Dwan's career spanned from the infancy of Hollywood to the twilight of the studio system. While his output of over 400 known titles renders a complete retrospective impossible, there have been recent, very impressive attempts. Cineteca Bologna presented the season 'Allan Dwan, *nobile primitivo*' at this year's Il Cinema Ritrovato (see Festivals, page 18), while New York's MoMA ran an even more comprehensive season timed to the publication of Frederic Lombardi's *Allan Dwan and the Rise and Decline of the Hollywood Studios*, a scrupulous new critical biography published by McFarland & Company.

To all of this we can add the appearance of *Allan Dwan (A Dossier)*, a collection of 50 essays in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese, compiled by David Phelps and Gina Telaroli, who have previously collaborated on a similar but slightly less sprawling collection related to the films of William A. Wellman. The whole kit and caboodle is available in an original-languages version for free browsing or download on the website of the Spanish journal Lumière (<http://elumiere.net/especiales/dwan/onlinedwan.php>), while English translations continue to trickle in.

The list of contributors includes *New York Times* critic Dave Kehr, Maximilian Le Cain (very fine on 1940s *Trail of the Vigilantes*) and filmmaker Serge Bozon, among a great many others. Some of the seminal Dwan texts are here



'Practicality Dwan': the director trained as an engineer before making over 400 films

in the lead-off slots, including John Dorr's essay 'The Griffith Tradition', originally published in a 1974 *Film Comment*, which posits that "the legacy of the Griffith Tradition became the history of the B-picture" – that is, the history of Dwan's sort of filmmaking. Joining it among the overview essays is Bill Krohn's 2003 piece 'The Cliff and the Flume', a career-spanning examination of Dwan's site-based, improvisatory poetics of space – a piece whose concerns are very much those of the *Dossier*.

The essays on individual films are chronologically arranged, beginning with 1916 Douglas Fairbanks feature *Manhattan Madness*; of these, standouts include Farran Nehme on *Manhandled* (1924) and Fernando C. Croce on *Montana Belle* (1952). Some redundancy is inevitable with so many contributors criss-crossing the same territory, reiterating the same career, though few have the concision and clarity of Kehr in his exhaustive history

Dwan's career spanned from the infancy of Hollywood to the twilight of the studio system, with over 400 known titles

of 1953's *Sweethearts on Parade*. The basic facts: after collaborating with Fairbanks on some of the first true blockbusters, Dwan forever after was working his way further out into the margins, from programmers at Fox to Republic in the 1940s to his genre quickies for producer Benedict Bogeaus in the 50s. For Chris Fujiwara, these films "reach a kind of hermeticism in their down-and-out commercialism, as if it were possible for a film to be so reduced and threadbare a genre piece as to become an art film. (And it is, of course, more than possible.)" Similarly, writing on 1956's tawdry Technicolor noir *Slightly Scarlet*, Joe McElhaney will note that Dwan's is "as much a formalist cinema as a narrative one".

The programme is to reveal the architectonics of that formal cinema, a method to which Dwan is singularly susceptible. He trained as an engineer and his films are outgrowths of obsessive spatial figures and paradigms. From Krohn and Andy Rector, there is a study in 1954's *Silver Lode*'s frieze-like compositions, originally liners to a DVD released in Spain by Versus, while Telaroli, herself a filmmaker, has peppered the pages with a number of visual-essay interpolations. These images suggest one reason for Dwan's recent resurrection: in an overwrought age, 'Practicality Dwan' offers a model of concision. ⑤

SIRENS & SINNERS

A VISUAL HISTORY OF WEIMAR FILM 1918-1933

By Hans Helmut Prinzler, Thames & Hudson, 308pp, £45, ISBN 9780500516898

Reviewed by Nick James

The cover of this sumptuous collection of high-quality movie stills shows actress Aud Egede-Nissen winking at the camera as she applies make-up with the help of a hand mirror. She wears a dark dress with a plunging neckline, a string of pearls, her tousled hair bobbed, all of which suggest that she's libidinous, elegant and unrestrained in the mode of the 1920s New Woman – but then she is playing a prostitute (in Karl Grune's *Die Strasse*, 1923). Decadent double standards aside, she's more the Louise Brooks It Girl archetype than the theatrical idea of Weimar bequeathed to us by Liza Minnelli's Sally Bowles in *Cabaret* (1972), which arguably found its inspiration more in the paintings of

Otto Dix than it did in the films of the era.

In 'The Restless Republic', his painstaking introductory profile of the Weimar cultural scene, author-curator Prinzler is careful to show the incredible breadth of work this period encompasses – it wasn't all Brecht and brothels. Yes, all the classics are represented here – the films of Dreyer, Lang, Lubitsch, Murnau, Ophüls, Pabst, Wegener and Wiene – but so are historical costume dramas, children's films, avant-garde works and early animation. The less familiar images are often as breathtaking as the famous Weimar era stills we've seen before (the latter, though, have never been so beautifully reproduced). Of the 443 illustrations in the book, 335 are rendered in a striking duotone, which lends the images a silvery finish and a rare sharpness. Being publicity stills, some of the images have a posed rigidity, but even these seem frozen in some poignant, definitively iconic event. I have too many favourites to single out any but the overall effect is like looking through time travel at a dream book drawn from an era as fraught with uncertainty as our own. ⑤



Street angel: Aud Egede-Nissen in *Die Strasse*

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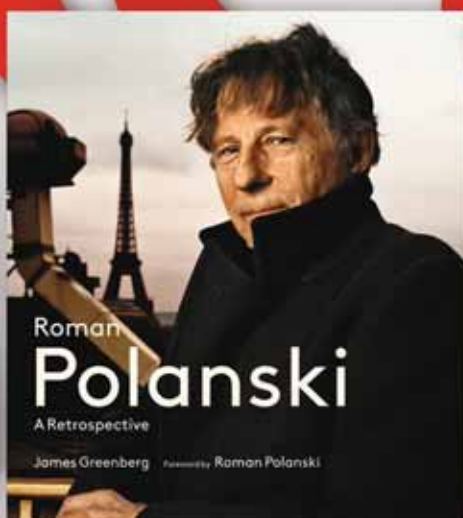
INVENTING PEACE

A Dialogue on Perception

By Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi, I.B. Tauris, 224pp, paperback, £14.99, ISBN 9781780766935

Inventing Peace revolves around the question of how we look at the world but fail to see the full extent of war, injustice, suffering and violence. In the form of a written dialogue, Wim Wenders and Mary Zournazi consider this question as one of the fundamental issues of our times and explore the need to reinvent a visual and moral language for peace. Inspired by various cinematic, philosophical, literary and artistic examples, Wenders and Zournazi reflect on the need for a change of perception in everyday life as well as in the creation of images.

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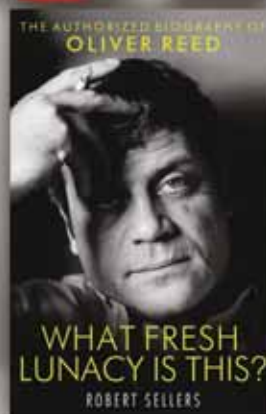
ROMAN POLANSKI

A Retrospective

By James Greenberg, Abrams Books, 288pp, hardback, illustrated, £25, ISBN 9781419707216

Roman Polanski: A Retrospective is the definitive tribute to one of the world's most prolific and influential film directors. Editor and film critic James Greenberg takes readers chronologically through Polanski's extraordinarily rich and varied career, offering unique insight into every one of Polanski's movies, from *Knife in the Water* (1962) to *Carnage* (2011). During his five-decade career, Polanski has provided generations of filmgoers with engaging, enchanting, and haunting movies, and this retrospective is a testament to his unrivalled and distinctive talent.

www.abramsbooks.co.uk



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The Authorized Biography of Oliver Reed

By Robert Sellers, Constable, 512pp, hardback, illustrated, £20, ISBN 9781472101129

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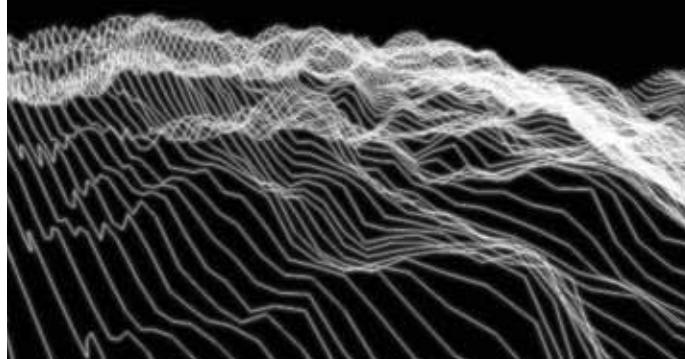


WARHOL IN TEN TAKES

Edited by Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 224pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781844574018

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READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at *Sight & Sound*, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

THE TALENTED MR CLEMENT

It was fascinating to read the response by Antonio Rodrigues (Letters, *S&S*, August), in which he suggests I do not know the difference between René Clément and Marcel Carné. Unlikely, as I'm a huge fan of both directors.

In this case it's Mr Rodrigues who needs to do a bit more reading. In his 1996 biography of Anthony Perkins, *Split Image*, Charles Winecoff describes in some detail the making of Clément's *The Sea Wall* (*Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, 1957, aka *This Angry Age*). He alludes explicitly to "gossip of Tony's intimate relationship with the film's director, René Clément". Rumours were so rife, apparently, that Natascia Mangano – sister of the film's leading lady Silvana – had to be drafted in to 'date' Perkins for PR purposes.

Biographies can be wrong, of course, even if Clément's films with Alain Delon – notably *Plein soleil* (1960) and *Joy House* (*Les Félins*, 1964) – are among the most homoerotic in French cinema. So it may be a step too far to describe Clément as a 'gay' director (my sincere apologies, if so). But a man whose "reputation was of a 100 per cent heterosexual"? Please.

Nor would I ever maintain the New Wave auteurs were motivated solely by homophobia. They had numerous motives for trashing the work of other directors – not least a totally ludicrous strain of pseudo-Marxism, and a vicious dislike of anybody more talented than they were. Rather than subject myself to more of their critical writing I would gladly settle down with a film by Marcel L'Herbier, Raymond Bernard, Marcel Carné, Jean Grémillon, Claude Autant-Lara, Julien Duvivier or any of the other despised masters of the *cinéma de papa* – whatever these men's sexuality may have been. That includes, of course, the brilliant René Clément.

David Melville, Edinburgh

THE OTHER GRETA G

So Greta Gerwig is "the most exciting actress in America" (Cover line, *S&S*, September), is she? It must be so confusing there being two Greta Gerwigs because surely you can't be referring to the somewhat shabby Greta Gerwig who can only play one type of character and has that slightly hesitant, mannered style of delivery? I'm afraid I find *that* Greta Gerwig as 'one-note' and distancing as the tiresome, preppy, middle-class directors – Whit Stillman, Noah Baumbach etc – she's associated with. I remember when that self-absorbed, overacting poseur Vincent Gallo was being hailed as 'the next Brando', and look how that turned out?!

Kieron Boote, Stoke-on-Trent

NEVER MIND THE BUTTOCKS

I have loved *Sight & Sound* for more than 50 years and I have huge respect for the current editor, but it seems to me that the periodical is beginning to slip into parody on occasion, perhaps because of the nature of the films it feels it must write about. Here is an example ("Spitting out the

LETTER OF THE MONTH THE LAST PICTURE SHOW



Following the mention of *Movedrome* (above) in your magazine ('Movies on the Box', *S&S*, August) I found myself fondly recalling much of the output of this facilitator of my early introduction into film. As a teenager (I was 14 when the first series aired) I would tape that evening's film (along with intro by Alex Cox, or later Mark Cousins) to watch again (and again) at my leisure. These VHS tapes are sadly landfill now, with only a small number of impassioned intros, mostly courtesy of Cox in the early days, available to view on YouTube.

Like Danny Leigh in his article, I too bemoan the major TV channels' seeming lack of interest in screening anything other than the same endless repeating carousel of mainstream films from only the last decade or so. A deeper

search into the schedules may throw up the occasional cult favourite or modern classic on Film4 or a bone-fide great on Sky Arts 1, but rarely is there anything akin to the kind of films found on *Movedrome* in the 1980s and 90s to view on the most popular channels. (The recent triumphant multi-release of *A Field in England* is a lone *Movedrome*-y exception.)

As a weekly scrutiniser of TV listings I can say with confidence that TV screenings of any of the films I taped as part of *Movedrome* have been either incredibly rare or zero since the airings some 25 years ago. I don't believe I would have experienced those films (many of which had a considerable impact) without my beloved *Movedrome*.

Daniel Malone, by email

truth', Wide Angle, *S&S*, August): "The middle part of Rosen's latest filmic triptych... focuses on a central yet liminal body part: the buttocks. We watch one woman... spank the naked bottom of another woman... until it's black-brown and blue-green... Witnessing the gradual increase of pain is an utterly discomforting spectacle for many reasons, mainly connected with the first part of the film, the documentary-interview mode of which connotes serious sincerity."

While we may be grateful that the work's sincerity is serious, I find myself torn between incredulous laughter and disgust at the dehumanising spectacle recounted here.

Grahame Smith, Stirling

ARMCHAIR MOVIES

As the author of a forthcoming book on the showing of feature films on British television (*Armchair Cinema*, to be published next year by Tomahawk Press), I was interested to read the letter on this subject from Roy Mills (*S&S*, August).

Mr Mills refers to a 1957 *S&S* article by Duncan Crow, 'From Screen to Screen', which gives the impression that the televising of cinema films in Britain was "a new thing at the time". In fact this practice already had a long

history: by the time Crow's article appeared, more than 300 films had been shown by the BBC in the post-war era (not to mention a scant few in the 1930s before the war brought a temporary interruption to the fledgling TV service), while more than 200 were screened by ITV in just its first two years of existence.

It's true that most of the films then available for broadcast were undistinguished – a category in which one could certainly include the title mentioned by your correspondent, *Love Happy*. Although it was not exactly, as Mr Mills claims, "one of the first films to be shown on television in this country", it nevertheless had (as the *Radio Times* was pleased to point out at the time of its UK TV premiere on 5 August 1957) the "distinction" of being the first of the Marx brothers' vehicles to be televised – little though it pleased either Crow or Kenneth Tynan!

Sheldon Hall, by email

Additions and corrections

August p.66 *Paradise: Hope*, Cert 15, 91m 35, 8,236 ft +8 frames; p.68 *Pussy Riot A Punk Prayer*, Cert 18, 88m 75, 7,930 ft +8 frames; p.71 *Blackfish*, Cert 15, 82m 56, 7,464 ft +0 frames; p.73 *Breathe In*, Cert 15, 97m 108, 8,745 ft +0 frames; p.74 *Days of Grace*, Cert 15, 131m 47s, 11,860 ft +8 frames; p.76 *Eden*, Cert 15, 97m 53s, 8,809 ft +8 frames; p.77 *Frances Ha*, Cert 15, 85m 57s, 7,735 ft +8 frames; p.84 *The Moo Man*, Cert U, 97m 34s, 8,781 ft +0 frames; p.87 *Play*, Cert 15, 118m 12s, 10,638 ft +0 frames; p.90 *Wadja*, Cert PG, 96m 54s, 8,721 ft +0 frames; July p.81 *Paradise Faith*, Cert 18, 115m 0s, 10,350 ft +0 frames

THE SOPRANOS



The famous last scene for one of television's most complex characters is poorly served by a debate about its literal meaning

By Matt Zoller Seitz

If you've chosen to read this piece, you surely know how David Chase's gangster saga *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) ends – or “goes on and on and on and on”, to quote the lyrics of the Journey song that plays over the final sequence. When season 6's final episode ‘Made in America’ first aired on HBO in the summer of 2007, it hit viewers with seismic force. The sudden cut to black made some wonder if their cable had gone out. The debate over what it meant began immediately and continued for years. The recent death of the show's star James Gandolfini seems to have jolted it back into the present tense, so strongly was he identified with that one character.

I won't provide a Zapruder-like analysis of the shots to prove or disprove that Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini) died at the diner (at the hand of ‘Man in Members Only Jacket’, or the unidentified African-American males, or perhaps the Boy Scout troop?), because the question of whether Tony sloughed off his mortal coil at that precise moment in time (why Tony and not Meadow, Carmela or A.J. – or all of them?) is not the main point of the scene. To stubbornly insist that it is the point – that it's a glorified game of Cluedo – flies in the face of everything one should have learned about *The Sopranos* by watching it over the course of six seasons. The fact that viewers are still fixated on ‘proving’ that Tony got whacked at the precise moment that Chase cut to black – to the seeming exclusion of the moral

and philosophical issues that Chase was trying to provoke – is a bit sad. It says to me that there remains an astoundingly deep hunger to see Tony punished for his sins, so that we can collectively wash our hands of him and get on with our lives.

Obviously Chase knows what he was trying to say with that ending – one doesn't bring such craft to bear on a four-minute scene if one has no opinion on what it might mean – and for a few years he rather heroically refrained from explaining it to us. More recently, though, he's regrettably dropped tidbits in interviews that have either confused the issue or encouraged the most literal-minded and reductive viewers to insist that their ‘Tony died’ theories had been vindicated by Chase himself. Why must Chase's oft-quoted lines about “fragility” and the wish to “present the idea of how short life is and how precious it is” necessarily indicate a gangland slaying at the diner?

I don't think Tony got whacked at the diner. My conviction is at least partly extra-dramatic, gleaned from interviewing Chase about his influences, beliefs and aesthetic sensibility, but I think it also jibes with a close reading of the show's methods and apparent world view. *The Sopranos* was an attraction-repulsion series that made you care about characters you'd find terrifying or disgusting in life, and be somewhat abashed or alarmed by how much you cared. It forced you to live with what its characters did: the crimes they committed or covered up, the moral shortcuts they took. This was all very deliberate.

That viewers are still fixated on ‘proving’ Tony got whacked at the moment Chase cut to black is a bit sad

Chase spent eight years railing against films and TV shows about violent criminals that absolved viewers of feelings of guilt and complicity by showing the hero led away in handcuffs or shot down in the street. Why would he then reverse course in the final moments of the final episode and kill Tony? And if what we were looking at was indeed a killing of that specific character, why was it presented in an arty, confusing way? To gussy up a boringly conventional gangster movie ending? Was Chase lying to us all those years about guilt and complicity in the gangster story in order to set us up for the dubious surprise of doing the most obvious thing one could possibly do?

Personally I think Chase whacked the viewer, violently yanking us out of the world we'd been living in for six seasons, and that's what he meant when he spoke of the desire to “rip it away” from us. That said, I would never insist that my interpretation is the only correct one and that any other is wrong. The only definitive thing that one can say about this ending is that it is not definitive. “Tony got shot at the diner” is a perfectly acceptable interpretation. “Tony died of a heart attack” is fine, too. “Tony lived on for years in a state of constant fear of arrest or murder” is also fine. “The entire family died at some point earlier in the episode and this is purgatory, thus the otherworldly atmosphere and the ritual consumption of onion rings as if they were holy wafers” also works for me. The word ‘ambiguous’ does not mean ‘definite, but presented in a clever or confusing way’. It means ‘open to more than one interpretation’. And as we interpret, we should be aware of what our interpretations say about us as people.

That, I suspect, may be the ending's deeper point: to get us to admit who we really are and what we want out of art. This, truly, is a matter of life or death. ☹

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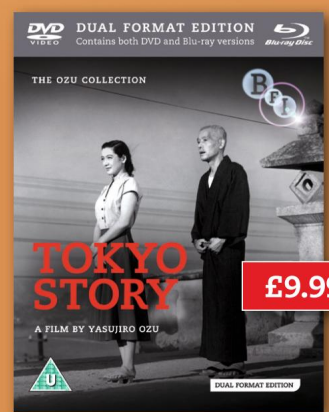
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